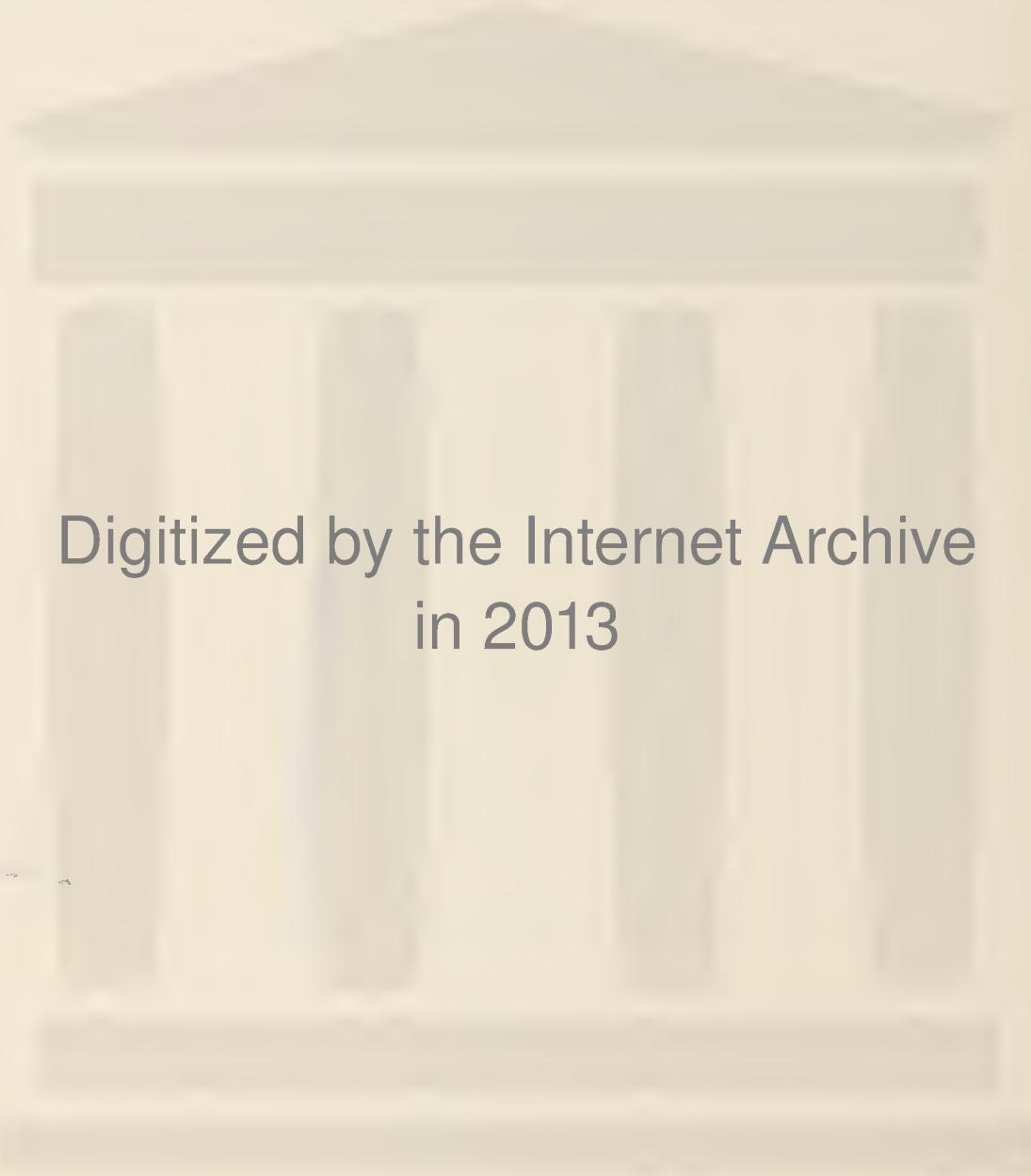




ARGUS '95



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ARGUS 1995



Norman's Dummy Takes Note - Matthew Dawson
First Place Spring Art Winner

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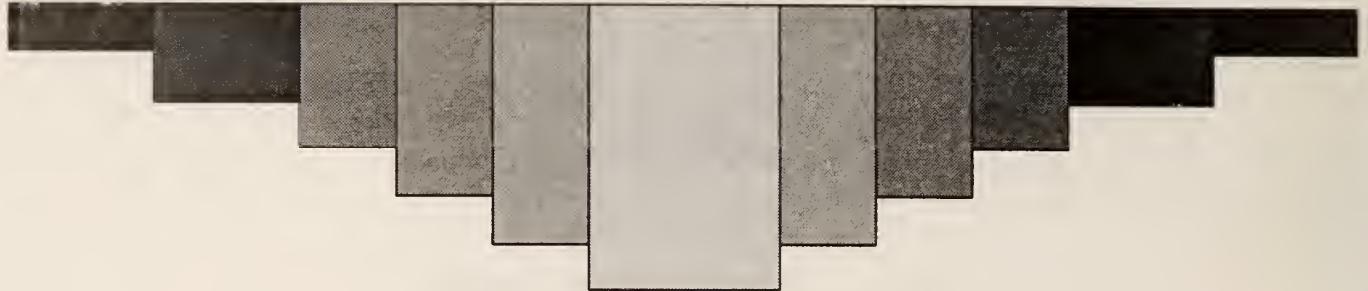
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Fall Contest Winners

Poetry

First Place: Sarah Credeur, "Dixie"

Second Place: Daniel Alan Hypes, "A Response to Keats' 'When I have fears that I may cease to be'"

Second Place: Tanya Bertrand, "Asphalt Blues"

Third Place: Angelica Kraushaar, "Untitled"

Fiction

First Place: Terry D. Pleasant, "Tanner's Place"

Second Place: John Doughty, Jr., "When God Died"

Third Place: Sean Eric McGill, "Steven"

Honorable Mention: Gregory John Romero, "An Episode of the Misfit"

Nonfiction

First Place: Amanda Rebecca Lord, "Freire's Fight for Human Consciousness"

Second Place: C. Michael Edwards, "A Conversation with C_: A Constructed Little Tale"

Third Place: Mark Burt, "The Lost Lamb"

Art

First Place: David Paul Alford, "Hanging by a Thread"

Second Place: Shelly Davis, "B-Boys"

Third Place: Mark Burt, "I Am A Flame"

Spring Contest Winners

Poetry

First Place: Christa Hopkins, "Winter Song"

Second Place: Jill Garner, "Changes:"

Third Place: Jason Maricle, "Portrait of a Louisiana Couple"

Honorable Mention: Soy-Moo-Goo, "Maybe"

Fiction

First Place: John Doughty, Jr., "How the Lord Blessed Amos and Dry-Hole"

Second Place: Terry D. Pleasant, "Apostasy"

Third Place: dK, "Romans 12:21"

Nonfiction

First Place: Rodney Lain, "Signifyin(g) as a Rhetorical Device in African-American Literature"

Second Place: Randy Price, "Contrary States of Being in Selected Poems for Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience"

Third Place: Nathaniel D. Wood, "'Homely Examples' in 'The American Scholar,' Walden, and Pragmatism'"

Art

First Place: Matthew Dawson, "Norman's Dummy Takes Note"

Second Place: 'drew, "Untitled"

Third Place: John Shamburger, "Brooding"

Honorable Mention: 'drew, "Freedom"



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"Hanging by a Thread" - Photograph by David Alford, Jr.
First Place Fall Art Winner

Playground Wisdom

Twit and twerp are two words for you
And don't give me that nonsense about rubber glue.
You see, I'm much tougher than mere sticks or stones.
Don't you know mean words cut right to the bone?
First in the class but picked last for the team,
That can conspire to make the tears gleam.
But then there were good times, that can't be denied
Like running and jumping and swingsets and slides.
We payed patty-cake and sang of Miss Sue
It's quite amazing what the playground can do.
The friendships we formed there were rocky at times
But they lasted for years, everytime the sun shined.
Yes, kids can be mean, their words sting like knives,
But we'll remember the playground for the rest
of our lives.

Jennifer Rowland

Mark Wilson '95

When I was a child
I had a playmate
called Bubba
one day he asked me
if he could take
the lid off
one of my Dad's
bee hives
so he could get
a piece of
honey comb
and I told Bubba

no
don't do that
the bees
will sting
you
aw - naw
he said
he knew how
to handle
them

so he did
it and
he got
stung
very badly
he bawled
like a
baby bull
and
the next day
his mama
said those
bees should
not be
allowed
in town

Go ahead
blame
the bees
when
it
was Bubba's
fault

The Scorpion

Bubba and the Bees





Untitled - by 'drew
Second Place Spring Art Winner

Poem 7

by Angelica Kraushaar

tape the stars back into the sky
they keep falling like the tears
no one has ever shed as emotions
like the distances to which time
must travel and the questions we
have answered left still unasked
throw the water out of the ocean
it keeps waving like the sadness
kept in the darkness of the soul
like those lamentations to their
lost loves and those reasons all
have kept secret in their hearts



Illustration by Mathew Dawson



Rainbow of Colors

by Chaye Whitney

*Races coming together
Against the
Ignorance of
National and worldwide prejudice
Between neighbors and friends
On a planet created from love
With none of this in mind*

*On a day
Full of happiness*

*Color is not here for insults
Only hope for a better tomorrow
Lonely are the ones ridiculed
On a street just the same as yours
Reality is what we all need to face
Seeing is not always believing.*

*June 95
Blazon*

A Song of Life

by Melissa Bahs

Whether we were sent to this extraordinary place by divine providence or by luck, we will never know. We, the passengers of Flight 409, never returned to the places we called home. Only four passengers, myself included, survived the initial crash. The survivors of “our world” are V. B. Gerrard, Lola Martines, Dianne Wisener, and myself—Jimmy Thorp. Together we discovered a “new world” that I often like to think of as “Eden.” Why we survived, and the other passengers perished, is a question all four of us ponder.

How we escaped the inferno inside the plane is just another mystery that plagues me. One minute we were falling towards the earth like a flaming hunk of steel, and the next minute I awoke to find the other three passengers and myself lying neatly along side each other in an open field of grass. The plane and any debris from it were nowhere in sight. I was astonished to see how carefully our bodies had been arranged. All of us had been placed on our backs with our arms crossed over our chests. What struck me about this position was that, instead of being scared of the unnatural poses my companions lay in, I felt completely at ease and almost tranquil.

Lola Martines was the next to stir. She woke up to see shimmering blades of cool grass and a bright array of perfumed flowers. The only words Lola could voice were “Dios mio.” Dianne Wisener woke up next, and she was so taken with the beauty of this field that she did not realize her husband was not among us. The last person to come to was V. B. Gerrard. Mr. Gerrard was very disoriented because he believed he had gone to heaven. Mr. Gerrard kept repeating, “I’m one year shy of seventy. It’s not fair. I’m one year shy of seventy.” Lola was not able to calm him down completely with her Spanish lullaby, but she was able to convince him that he was still alive.

We all sat together trying to figure out what beautiful, non-contaminated part of the world we could possibly have arrived in. No one knew how we got to this field, where the plane was, or where any of the other passengers were. At the thought of the other passengers, Dianne began to sob, “My husband, David! Where’s my husband?” We were all so busy trying to comfort Dianne that none of us noticed the crowd of people that surrounded us.

“Why does dew fall from her eyes,” a strange voice questioned.

The question startled all four of us, and we all turned to find that we had been encompassed in a perfect circle by people of an extraordinary nature. The faces of the people looked soft as silk, and their eyes sparkled and twinkled in the sunlight. And oh my God! What dress! These people’s clothes were as colorfully vibrant and alive as the flowers in this field that we now stood in. They all joined hands and began to sway and sing, encompassing their warmth inside the circle. I had never heard such melodies, or felt so much love. I thought I would start crying. In fact, Dianne began to sob, but I did not know if she cried for her husband or for the music. After the song ended, a woman with a single white daisy in her hair stepped forward. I mistook her for a princess of this land because she was the first to greet our party. However, I learned later that everyone had equal authority and that her job was to act as a moderator in foreign relations.

“Welcome to Fugue,” the lady with the daisy in her hair said warmly, “My name is Allegra. My people and I harmoniously invite you to take part in our lives and to learn measure by measure the symphony of fugues that we enjoy.”

I was stunned by the music present in her voice, and by the words she chose to express herself. Never before had I heard such dulcet tones come from the throat of a human being. I was curious to know what she meant by her words, but forgetting my manners, and before I could ask any questions, Mr. Gerrard politely and cordially introduced himself. Then he continued to introduce the rest of our group.

“Why don’t you join our ‘Ensemble’,” Allegra said and gestured for us to take hands in the circle. “Together we may make a melody and you, Jimmy Thorp with the questioning face, may learn all about Fugue and its method.”

With these words uttered by Allegra, the people of Fugue split, leaving four open spaces for us, the passengers of Flight 409, to join the circle. Allegra took each of us by the hand and led us to our designated

spots in the circle which she called the “Ensemble.” When Allegra led me to my place in the Ensemble, two girls looking exactly alike outstretched their hands to me with a smile. They gently took my hands in theirs and introduced themselves as Harmonye and Melodye. Allegra sat in the middle of the circle with her legs crossed Indian-style. She lowered her arms and beckoned for the rest of the Ensemble to sit. Once we were all seated holding hands and with our knees touching our neighbor’s, Allegra spoke.

“We would like to ask you questions, and you may ask us any question you would like. I will answer your inquiries with the help of my fellow Fugueians. Together we may be able to blend our two different cultures and make a melodious symphony.”

“How did we get here?” Dianne blurted out. “I mean, one second I’m sitting next to my husband and a second later I wake up without him. Where is he? Is he dead?” Dianne started crying again.

“We do not know how you came to our land, nor do we know what happened to your husband. We only know that you are here, and we are pleased to meet you. Hopefully, we can learn your melodies, like I’m sure you’re eager to learn ours.” Allegra answered Dianne.

“What are these ‘melodies’ you speak of? We have no melodies to teach you.” I said. A laugh rippled around the circle.

Allegra began, “We all have melodies. The way we fit in with nature, the way we coincide with our fellow human beings, and the way we view ourselves all orchestrate the melodies. When we ~~were~~ together, we create happiness, and that is music. Anything that gives pleasure creates beautiful music. Listen to the breeze blowing through the grass and you will hear a hum. All things living create music, including the most complex organisms such as you and me. When joined together, these different patterns all fuse together to form one song, one fugue. Pitch! Balance! Precision!”

At the end of this long speech about these people’s musical harmony, the people echoed Allegra.

“Pitch! Balance! Precision!”

“Andante,” Allegra singled out a young boy sitting to the right of Mr. Gerrard, “will you please explain to our guests the importance of pitch.”

The boy Andante rose and took Allegra’s position in the center of the circle, while Allegra took hold of Mr. Gerrard’s hand in the circle. The boy carried himself confidently in his long, multi-colored gown. At this moment I realized that both men and women wore gowns—long, flowing gowns that hung loosely and swayed slightly in the breeze. I thought it strange that the men were not particularly masculine, nor were the women particularly feminine. Neither the men nor the women seemed to dominate the other.

“Pitch,” the boy started, “is where harmony begins. Without pitch there is no harmony. Everyone must be in tune. If someone is not in tune, then the harmony is disrupted in society. For example, if someone thinks only of himself or herself, and goes against his or her own personal gain, he or she hurts society. Then the pitch is sharp. If a person dreads too much about life, and worries about an end to his or her own creation, then the pitch is flat. In order to have a harmonious society, the pitch of each individual must be dead center, so as not to throw off the pitch of society as a whole.”

This made sense to me. Our society’s selfishness made me dizzy. Everyone was out for their own personal glory. People such as the Rockefellers and Trumps only looked out for themselves, because that was the only way to get ahead. To see a society which cared about everyone equally brought a tear to my eye. I was envious of these people.

“What about when someone dies?” asked Dianne, thinking of her missing husband. “Is not that person allowed to grieve without worrying about upsetting his or her own pitch, thus upsetting the community?”

“Why would one grieve?”

“Because, they have lost someone close and will never see them again.” insisted Dianne.

“Ah, but you will see them again. The person may have died, but his or her melody lives on in nature. The person passes his melody into the earth, and at that spot where his soul has whispered his song, flowers, grass, or trees will sprout, and they will know and sing his song. Nature is a continuous cycle, so no one dies and no melody is lost. Thus, no one is sad when a loved one passes on.”

This simple and elegant explanation given by Andante soothed Dianne. I could see the other survivors nodding their heads with approval as if this idea suited them. I saw the pain lift from Dianne’s face, and I watched as she silently slipped her wedding ring off, dug a hole in the ground, and buried it with a soft smile. I felt a slight pang in my heart to see how easily we all accepted these ideas as truth and made no objections.

"Ooh, let me tell about Balance, Allegra." piped up a young girl across from Dianne.

"Go ahead, Belle." Belle sat where Andante and Allegra had sat before her.

"Balance, just as Pitch, adds to the harmony of Fugue. No one must dominate. We must all blend together so that each of our melodies are heard. Each one's melody is important, therefore every individual is important. If one person tries too hard to be heard, then everything is thrown off balance. Then there is much discord."

"Do all races have equal share in communal activities, or are some dominant?" Lola inquired. Belle seemed to be thrown off by Lola's question.

"Races? I do not understand why you pluralize the word. We are all one race. We all belong to the human race. If you mean by the word 'race' the difference between human beings and nature's wild kingdom, then yes, we must have a balance between nature's race and ours."

"Do you not see the difference in my skin and yours?"

"No," responded Belle, "they both cover the same kind of structure."

"My skin is darker than yours," persisted Lola, "don't you see the difference?"

"No." Belle innocently repeated.

I knew Lola was trying to make a point about the natural differences between people, but Belle's refreshing, twinkling eyes, like the other Fugueians, saw Lola as an equal. These people had no knowledge of racism, of hatred based on the color of one's skin. I thought Lola would be happy with this oddity, but she seemed confused and bewildered. Lola was used to a world that worked against her. Now she found herself in a world where she did not have to be on the defensive, and did not know how to respond to this absolute equality.

"Would anyone care to speak about Precision?" Allegra asked.

An elderly man, older than Mr. Gerrard, got to his feet and silently moved to the center. He aided Belle up and walked her quietly to his spot in the circle. The old man held his head with dignity, and if it were not for the lines on his face and the white hair, I would not have known the man was old. His physique was like mine, a man in his early thirties. The old man sat down and cleared his throat.

"Precision is what makes a fugue a fugue. Everyone must do precisely what they are supposed to do or else the precision is thrown off, and so is everyone else. Everyone's melody fits together delicately; therefore, to keep the community happy, one must be precise in one's work, whether it is bringing food to the community or educating the youth. If a person doesn't carry out the job precisely, the whole community is jumbled and you cannot clearly hear the many voices. This person has thus spoiled the society."

"But what 'precisely' can old people like you and me give to the society?" asked Mr. Gerrard, who had kept silent until now.

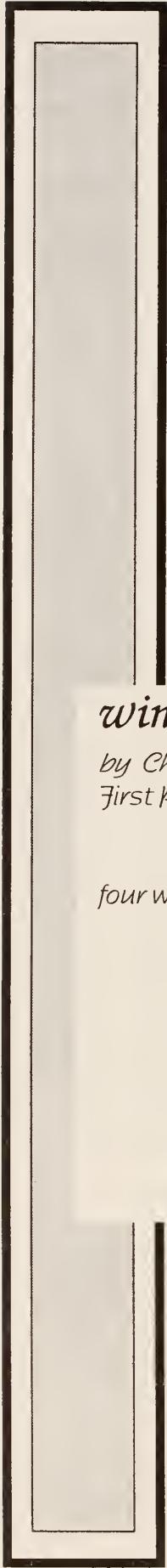
"We give our wisdom, our love, and our friendship to the young. We are the keepers of the past, and our job is the most important. Society must remember, so we can avoid past mistakes. Our role and rhythm is life must be precise."

Mr. Gerrard seemed very pleased with this answer, and I noticed a slight change in his posture. Mr. Gerrard straightened his back and appeared to almost grow an inch before my eyes. I smiled at his newfound dignity. Yet, I wondered about what past mistakes these people could possibly have to remember.

"Thank you, Rallentando." Allegra said, rising. Allegra helped Rallentando back to what had originally been Andante's place in the circle.

"We have been long here in this field, and I know our guests must be getting hungry. Come, let us go into the town."

I looked up into the sky and sure enough I could see the first evening star. The breeze started to blow a little more forcefully, as if to suggest we should depart. Allegra broke the circle and the people started walking around, introducing themselves to their new friends. Then Allegra beckoned for all of us to follow her. I watched them walk away with their beautiful gowns illuminated by the moon flowing behind them, swishing along the blades of grass. It thought, this harmonious land of Fugue gave Lola confidence to be a person not a race, Dianne her husband, and Mr. Gerrard his dignity back. What had this place of sounds and nature given me? I looked at all the faces in the distance—strong Allegra, the majestic Rallentando, the beautiful twins Melodye and Harmonye, the eager Belle, and the young Andante. What had this place given me? This place had given me peace. Peace I could not find in any town, city, or suburb in America and believe me, I tried. I have found my salvation here, and I am staying. I wonder how I will fit in with this society. What will my song be?



winter song

by Christa Hopkins

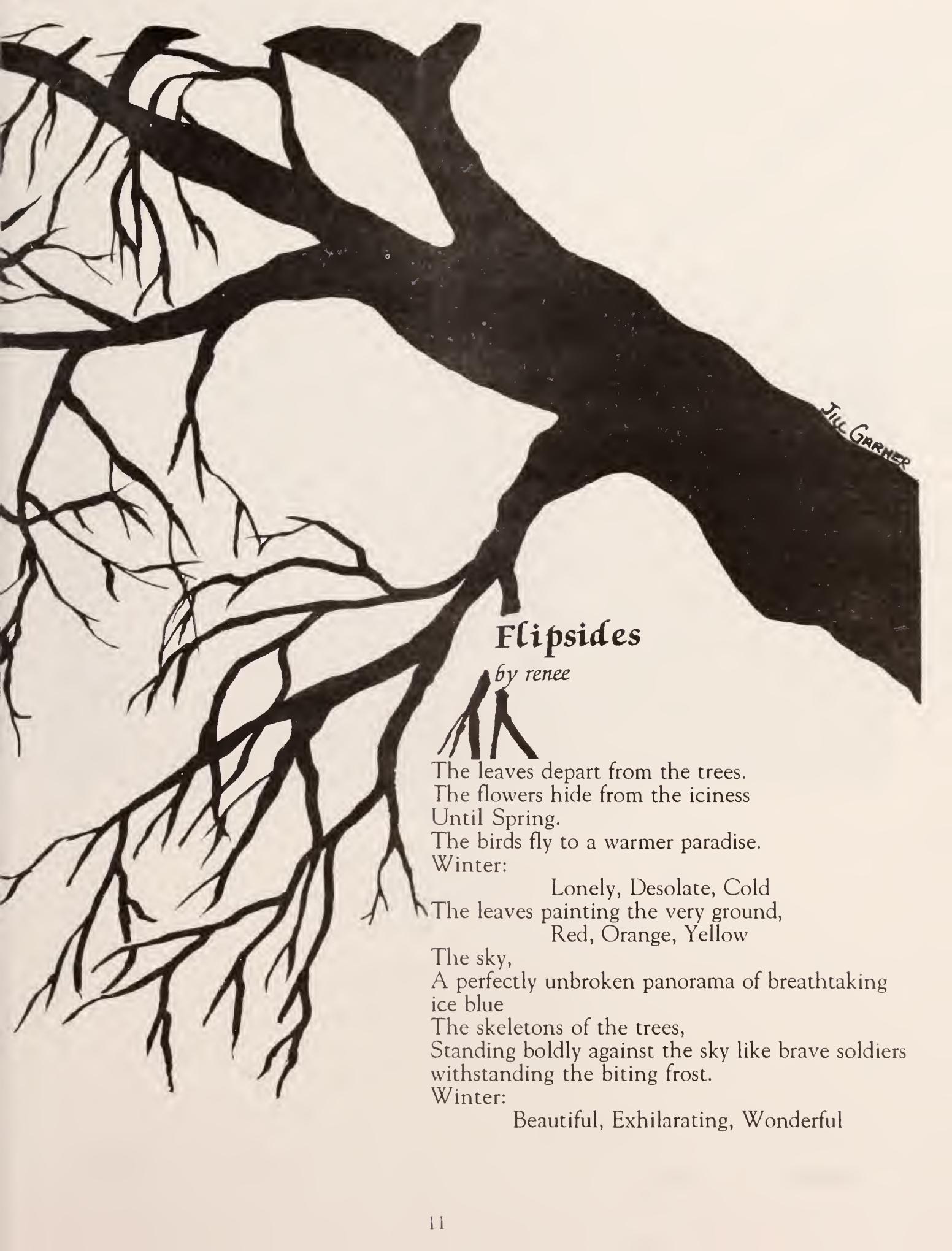
First Place Spring Poetry Winner

four walls, two windows facing south—

*pale, soft-watery light falls across the floor,
a pond pooling warmth on shadows' map.*

*light-writing, a negative on its rippled carpet-plate,
invites adventure beyond cold, delusive glass:*

*the entrancement splinters in mirrors shards as i stumble into
a stifling white embrace by the endless pavement of glaring ice.*



TILL GARNER

Flipsides

by renee

The leaves depart from the trees.
The flowers hide from the iciness
Until Spring.

The birds fly to a warmer paradise.
Winter:

Lonely, Desolate, Cold
The leaves painting the very ground,
Red, Orange, Yellow

The sky,
A perfectly unbroken panorama of breathtaking
ice blue

The skeletons of the trees,
Standing boldly against the sky like brave soldiers
withstanding the biting frost.

Winter:

Beautiful, Exhilarating, Wonderful



No, It's not a Hoof! -Julyhana Walker

Maybe

by Julie Tisdale

Honorable Mention Spring Poetry

maybe i'll just curl
up with my pet iguana merlin
and forget all this

maybe i'll just name
the apple i ate for lunch
florence and
become cannibalistic

maybe i'll turn on the T.V.
to a southern baptist minister
who feels my pain

maybe i'll chew my toenails
and walk
on my hands

maybe i'll pretend
not to know how
to read or write
and be illegitimate

maybe Big Bird will
be my friend
if I believe in snuffelupogus

maybe i'll drag a
tape measure behind me
and pretend i have
a pet ferret

maybe i'll buy 47
yellow-white striped cats
and name them erlenmeyer

or maybe i won't do anything
at all

A Conversation With C_: **A Constructed Little Tale**

by C. Michael Edwards
Second Place Fall Nonfiction Winner

Immediately upon receipt of the list of topics for discussion in my “Physical Concepts of Time” class, I ran home in a panic. Upon arrival, I calmed down and got to a serious consideration of how I could cheat on this assignment and get by with the minimum effort possible. Thus amused by my confidence in my own deviousness, I went to my desk and quickly assembled the crystalline components of the warp pulse transmitter that my space alien friend, C_, gave me for the purposes of interstellar communication and word processing.

I managed to contact C_ without delay, and after a lengthy conversation (C_ is such a gossip), we got down to business.

“C_,” I said. “I need help.”

When C_ smiles, she reminds me of a cross between Star Trek’s Mister Spock and a Bengal Tiger. “Let me guess,” she replied with a wide grin, “Doctor Magi’s Philosophy class again?”

“Yes,” I replied.

“What else is news?”

I decided to leave that unanswered. “Well anyway, I’ve got this paper I’m supposed to write for class. He gave us two topics to choose a thesis from. The one I chose is a discussion question: ‘Are there twenty consecutive 7’s in the decimal expansion of pi?’ I decided to argue from the viewpoint that it was possible.”

“I see,” C_ said, nodding sagely. “Well, I’m not too familiar with this topic, so you’ll have to forgive a few stupid questions now and then.”

“That’s okay,” I told her innocently. “Any help you can give would be welcome. Ask away.”

“What is pi?”

I laughed, “Come on C_, quit joking around.”

“No, really, tell be about this number thing,” she insisted. So I did. After all, she does get to read a little on transcendental mathematics now and then, which could come in handy.

“And what’s its value again?”

I sighed and snuck a quick peek at my pocket calculator: “3.1425926524—”

“And what does the ‘7’ have to do with it?”

“Well, according to Roger Penrose, there’s a ‘7’ in the decimal expansion, and there could conceivably be a set of twenty consecutive 7’s in it somewhere later on, though that hasn’t been shown to be true yet.”

“Where?”

“How should I know? I haven’t computed the whole thing.”

“I’m not surprised. Well, what are the properties of the number in this set? I thought you said it was a single constant value?”

“It’s not a set,” I assured her. “It’s a constant—the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.”

“It it’s a single number, then how can it have twenty 7’s in it?”

“Well, say you have a number that’s written as ‘7’ followed by nineteen 7’s. That’s, um, seven hundred seventy-seven quintillion seven hundred seventy-seven quadrillion

. . .” (You get the idea.)

“Ah,” said C_, “but that’s a number. How can a number be inside another number and not be part of the process of reaching it?”

This made less than perfect sense. “Huh?”

“Well, what makes a group of twenty 7’s a number?”

“You can, if you have the patience, count up to a number that can be written as having twenty 7’s, or have a ratio that can be written as having twenty 7’s.”

“Fine. So how do you count to pi?”

“Uh, you can’t. It’s irrational.”

“Tell me about it. Who ever heard of a number you can’t count to?”

“It’s just a name. According to Roger Penrose’s book, The Emperor’s New Mind, an irrational num-

ber is just a number that cannot be expressed as the ratio of two integers.”

C_ was shocked by this information. “Michael,” she gasped, “you read for class.”

“I was desperate. Anyway, mathematical proofs exist which show that these numbers cannot be expressed as fractions, and their decimal expansions have an infinite number of digits.”

“In the base ten system you folks use, or in any numeral system?”

“Any, I guess. It shouldn’t make a difference.”

C_ smiled again. “So what’s this business about 7’s. Just use base six and say no.”

“It’s not that easy. Doctor Magi has already foreseen that ploy for getting around the question.”

“Ouch, preemptive strike.”

“I had half a page of rebuttals ready and everything.”

“What a vast amount of effort you’ve wasted. Well, now that you’ve got me hooked, can you please explain how you arrive at a single number with an infinite number of digits?”

I whipped out my old calculus textbook and explained the quickest algorithm for computing pi. “And you just carry on with that.”

“How far?”

“Well, as I said, pi has an infinite decimal expansion. So you just carry on until you’ve had enough.”

“Oh, so there really isn’t a number ‘pi,’ is there? It’s just whatever the process yields and you take it to whatever degree of accuracy you want.”

“No, no, there is a number value with the value pi. It’s a constant.”

“How can that be true if it takes an infinite amount of time to compute it?”

“Maybe I’d better just do the paper on Zeno’s paradoxes . . .”

“If there is a number pi, why define it as a process alone?”

“It has a value, C_. It just has an infinite decimal expansion. For example, consider the infinite sequence made up of the successive summations of the inverse power of two. Now, according to Bertrand Russell, that converges to a single value—one—so the value of the element of the sequence at infinity can be said to be equal to one.”

“One is a number with a finite number of digits that you can count to. Is pi an infinite sequence?”

“No, but the algorithm used to compute it is. And its digits form an infinite set.”

“Is this some sort of religious thing?”

“Not in my part of the country. But pi exists.”

“Prove it.”

“C_, the algorithm is an infinite process. It can never be completed. But it can be done.”

“It can be *performed*? You do it because the circle computations are made easier if you have a ready value with the degree of accuracy you need. There is no fixed value because the value is determined by the process used. And don’t go throwing another reference at me ‘cause I’ve got one of my own: twentieth century human philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. He was a mathematician too, you know.”

“I never thought of it that way before. Assuming there’s any truth to it, wouldn’t that make pi a purely functional geometric concept?”

“And trying to assign it a value would be like trying to assign a universal value to opposite angles in geometry instead of describing them with the proper equations. It’s a ratio with a set of properties, not a number.”

“I wonder if the square root of two could be thought of in the same way?”

“What’s the square root of two?”

“Never mind! Never mind! It’s just another irrational number that’s defined similarly through the use of isosceles right triangles. It can also be thought of as a multiplying factor, hence the name ‘square root.’ This describes a factor that, when multiplied by itself, yields another number of which that factor is the square root. But that was originally defined as a geometric concept just like pi.”

“Are there any other irrational numbers that aren’t the result of finding values to complete geometric relations?”

“Well, there’s the base of natural logarithms, which describes some exponential progressions. It’s defined as the result of an infinite sequence as well.”

“Okay. By the way, what’s the furthest anyone’s ever taken this pi algorithm?”

“I don’t know. I don’t have any reference. I hear it’s to about two million decimal places. They churn out more digits all the time.”

“There must be one bored computer somewhere.”

I laughed. "So let me see, what we've got so far for a thesis is this: Pi cannot have twenty consecutive 7's in its decimal expansion because assigning it a fixed decimal expansion in the first place assumes that it is a number when it isn't. You can't count to pi. It's an equation or an iterative process, depending on which way you look at it, so assigning it an all-encompassing value is foolish. Now, you might eventually get a value out of the algorithm that has twenty consecutive 7's, but that's not pi."

"Or it could just be an irrational normal point for a Taylor series expansion of the appropriate equation."

"C_! Cut that out."

"Sorry." That smile again. "I've been listening to my cousin, B_."

I briefly reviewed the transmitter log of our conversation. "You know, I might have enough here to make a decent argument with."

"Yes, you just might."

"Thanks, C_."

"Any time you want to gab again, just give me a buzz."

"Sure thing."

"On, and Michael?"

"Yes?"

"Just between you and me, I think that you'd be better off writing about one of the other topics."

And then, with typical C_ timing, a freak collapse of some stellar core or other terminated the connections. I really do think she plans these things.

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Anton, Howard. Calculus with Analytic Geometry, Third Edition. John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1987: Chapter 11.

Penrose, Roger. The Emporer's New Mind. Viking Penguin, 1991: 74-117.

Russell, Bertrand. Our Knowledge of the External World. Allen and Unwin, 1926: Lectures 6 and 7.

Whitehead, Alfred North. Modes of Thought. Macmillan Co., 1926: 84-104.



Visions of Thought - by Keith Elliot

as I lay dying on a table at texaco
by Julie Tisdale

Gazing up at the ceiling
thick blobs of yellow-brown mustard
you never notice
crusty and splattered
like fifth grade
when the boys used to shoot
mustard through straws in the cafeteria
to see who could get the biggest
glob stuck

looking at the glossy brown winged roach
he seems to be laughing at me
his antennae moving
twitching
his forearms prying at the mustard
his wings so beautiful
shiny
connected so thinly
to his exoskeleton

I expect any minute
the owner will come up to me
dissainfully shaking her head
“please don’t bleed on the tables,
unless you plan to clean it up.
other customers need to use it.”

I imagine
I’ll be expected to come back
to clean up my body from the table
unless I keep buying things
which may prove difficult
seeing I’ll be dead

All the while
the roach
will look down
at me
and
laugh.

Almost a Sonnet

by Daniel Alan Hypes

The state this married pair was in,
when on their wedding night they fought,
the maze of fashion's hooks and pins
to free their wardrobes from the cot.

Satan published schemes in men
that led to button, snap, and knot,
distracting earnest hands from sin,
by mechanizing deed and thought.

But as the world grew sick with fear,
that no solution should abound
there rose in every town a cheer,
that some invention had been found.

And carried down the cobbled row,
They raised the man-his name Velcro.

BIRTH

BY THE SCORPION

conception can
occur in a
sneaky and
unplanned
way

and an embryo
starts to
grow and
develop

genes from
past
generations
dictate how
the embryo
will form
and what
it will
be

and when
the time
is right
an idea
will
be
born



The Truth in Beauty

by John Doughty, Jr.

In Ling-Long land upon a strand of peaceful palms and corals
The elders met and they did set their minds on village morals.

The Chieftain sat on a woven mat of the hair of consecration
And took a toke of wisdom smoke from the weed of inspiration.

Through the smoke not a word was spoke as he passed the pipe around
To the elders there with graying hair summoned to the council mound.

But as of late a jealous state of despise and discontentment
Has spread like fire on a funeral pyre and filled us with resentment.

For Ding A Ling and Dong A Long the gods have blessed with beauty
But of purity and modesty . . . the gods have forgotten their duty.

For Ding is fair with golden hair and her breasts are round and ample,
But the female prize between her thighs . . . most men have had a sample.

And Dong is long and full of song about his granted manly affection;
In village square he is nightly there gratifying his massive erection.

Now our village green is a chaotic scene of rivalry and hating
And man and wife are full of strife and fight instead of mating.

So Chieftain spoke and took a toke of the weed of inspiration
And resumed his chair of wisdom hair on the mat of consecration.

The pipe went round and the old men found no end to the confusion
Until one of them said and nodded his head: I think I know the solution.

The old man arose to speak in prose to the other men at the podium,
But from his toothless mouth he did spout this verse of toothy wisdom:

With advancing age the years do rage on youthful lust and features,
And lessons taught will not be ought when years become the teachers.

So to Ding A Ling and Dong A Long the elders gave a duty:
The world to roam and not come home until they found the Truth ion Beauty.

So they left their village cleft with strife between the sexes,
And moonlight beams did light up scenes of love between the "exes."

To Ling-Long land there came again the joyous marital relation,
But the journey long of Ding and Dong became a quest for information.

In kingdom and state they did interrogate the elders with their query,
But councils wise did not realize the Truth of Truth in Beauty.

After Twenty years and many tears they came upon a mountain,
And at its peak the two did seek a wise man at a fountain.

Up there he sat on a woven mat like the king of God's seraphim.
With heads bowed down they did expound and speak these words verbatim:

Wise man of age our elders sage did give us a sacred duty:
The world to roam and not come home until we found the Truth in Beauty.

The wise man perceived what years had reaved from their youthful grace and ability.
And soothed their minds with words in rimes and wisdom of ancient facility:

Oh tragic two your task is through you have fulfilled your sacred duty.
Go home at last your journey past for you have become the Truth in Beauty.

So Ding and Dong did not prolong; Ling-Ling was their destination.
With wrinkled brow and much wiser now they went home with their information.

Now lovely lass in creative writing class this story ends with another:
Your future features lie before your eye; you will look just like your mother.

And woe that Joe and sad that Brad and Cliff and Len and Doctor Milliman
Will eulogize that female prize when it is a lovely recollection.

And that my friend you must comprehend is the Truth of Truth in Beauty.

"An Episode of the Misfit"

Based on Flannery O'Conner's
"A Good Man is Hard to Find."

by Gregory John Romero
Honorable Mention Fall Fiction

The listless hours seemed to drone on forever as I cautiously drove through the country road. It was Hiram's shift to be on the lookout for anything suspicious. My nephew, Bobby Lee, taking advantage of this time to rest, lay quietly in the back seat on his corpulent stomach. Hiram noticed a family up yonder. As I spotted them, almost as if it were my doing, they plummeted into a ditch bordering the road, turning the car over in the process.

Bobby woke up at once as we ventured towards the now defenseless family. Edging in slowly, I caught sight of an elderly lady whom I immediately loved and despised. I tried desperately to focus my attention on them. She was babbling something about how they were in distress or something. I chuckled to myself, wondering how she could possibly think that I didn't know that they needed help. I stopped the car and we prepared ourselves for the upcoming transaction.

I got out after Bobby Lee and Hiram and took a view of the spectacle. Everything appeared routine until I heard those piercing, blood-curdling shrieks. I searched for the source and when I found it, I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me. I took off my specs, cleaned them and looked again. I couldn't understand why this normal looking family brought along with them these two creatures. One was the height of a small child except he had a hunched over, red, fur-coated body with large wings. The other beast was a little smaller, yet her teeth appeared to be much sharper. Wary of these things, I told Bobby Lee and Hiram to draw their guns. Bobby Lee grinned. As we walked towards the family, I felt the older woman's eyes burning on me, which I didn't like. I spoke to them. "Good afternoon," I said. "I see you all had you a little spill."

I asked my nephew's buddy to try to start their car. As I finished my sentence, the bigger mutant growled and flapped his wings in my direction. Nervous, and not wanting to show it, I asked the younger woman to have the "children" sit next to her. The smaller one hissed, flashing her razor-sharp jowls. The man boomed, "Look here! We're in a predicament!" But before he could finish, the gray woman interrupted, "You're the Misfit! I recognized you at once!" Taken aback by her accusation, yet honored by it, I smirked and replied, "Yes'm, but it would have been better for all of you, lady, if you hadn't recognized me."

As I realized I now had a reason to get rid of those hideous, atrocious beasts, the man realized it also. He jerked his bald head at the now culprit and yelled ferociously at her, releasing what seemed like years of frustration. I tried to console the sobbing woman as she pleaded to me, "You wouldn't shoot a lady, would you?"

I truthfully answered, knowing I was only aiming at exterminating the mutants, "I would hate to have to." The older woman typically and desperately commented, "I know you're a good man." I thanked her, and as we chatted aimlessly, I kept watch on the two devils. She threw in more flattery. The bald man, trying to take control, yelled for everyone to shut up and let him handle this, which I didn't really understand. Hiram filled me in on the fallen car's condition. Tired of feeling the bigger beast's bloodshot eyes analyzing me, I told Hiram and Bobby Lee to take care of the beast and the bald man. The bald man protested as Hiram dragged him off.

Several minutes later, right before the gun shots, the old woman asked me if I ever prayed. The next few minutes I remember talking to her, but I'm not certain what about. All I recall is her perseverance to get me to pray. She told me, "Jesus would help you." I chuckled. "I don't want no help, I'm doing alright by myself."

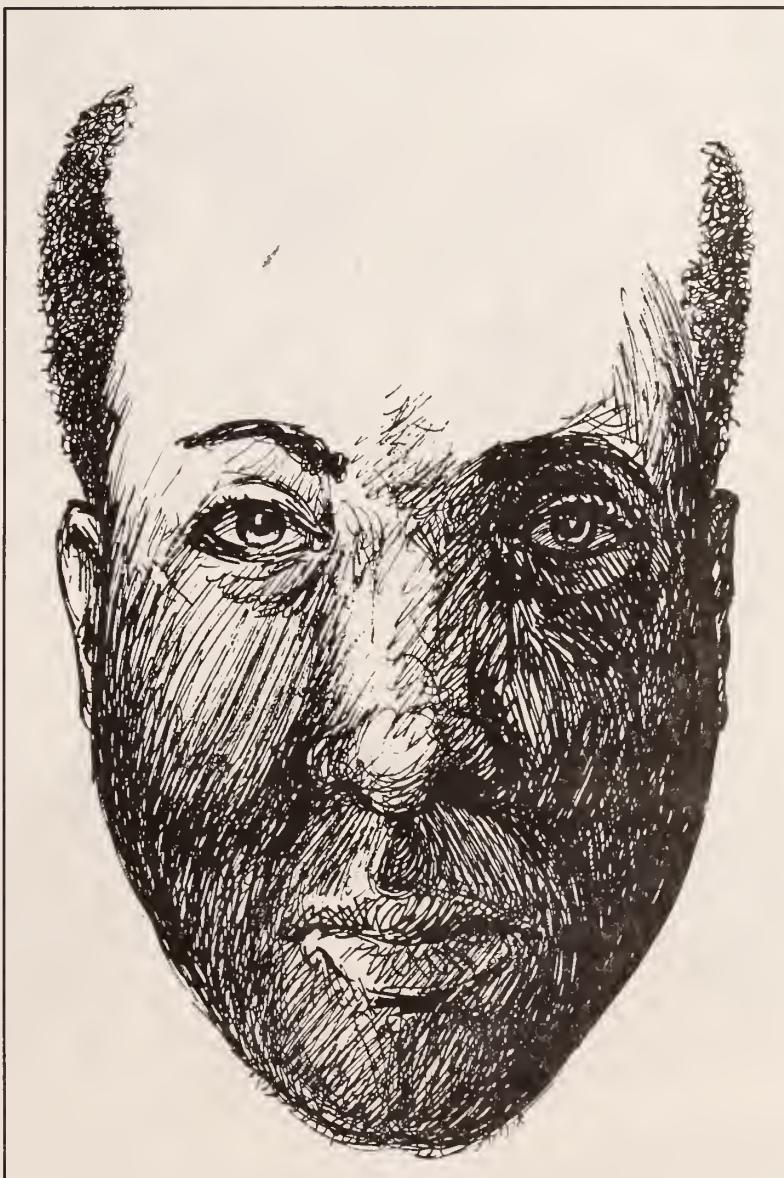
As Bobby Lee and Hiram returned from the adjacent woods, I put on the bald man's shirt, knowing he probably wouldn't need it much longer. I sensed the young lady's discomfort and asked if she wanted to join her husband. She said, "Yes, thank you," and as she stood up, I noticed she was holding a sickly sparrow. Bobby Lee reached for the lady's daughter, but she bit him with her piercing teeth.

Alone with the old woman, I heard her cursing Jesus for his doing. I agreed with her. "Jesus has thrown everything off balance."

After she heard a scream and a couple more gunshots, she cried, "Jesus!" as if she were addressing me. "You've got good blood!" She once again addressed me incorrectly, "Jesus, you ought not to shoot a lady." How ironic she should call me such a name. Agonized, she pleaded for her son, as if her heart would break.

I reminded the woman, "Jesus was the only one that ever raised the dead, and he shouldn't have done it. He's thrown everything off balance." As she collapsed to the ground, I spoke. "I wasn't there, so I can't say he didn't. I wish I had been there," I said, figuring she had no idea of what I was saying. "Listen lady, if I had been there, I would have known and I wouldn't be like I am now." I knew she didn't understand what I meant, but my tragic fall was the reason for her hellacious misery.

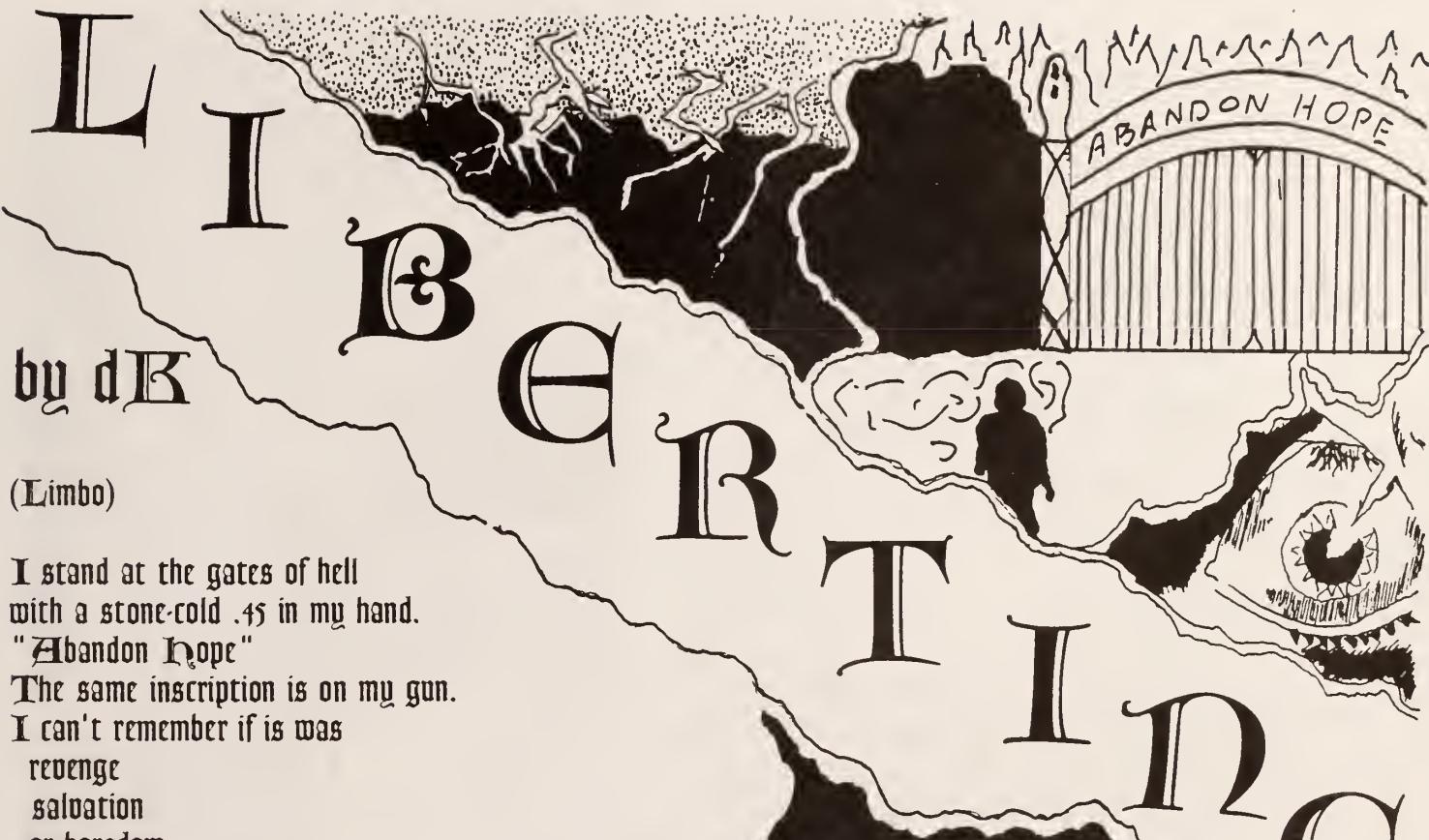
When I looked up at her again, her eyes paled, and her voice lowered as she reminded me, "Why, you're one of my babies! You're one of my own children!" He reached and with his gentle touch, placed a calm hand on my shoulder. I fired my gun three times in his chest. I looked down at the spirit-ridden, motionless woman and cursed at the sky. "I said I didn't want your help!"



Untitled - Nathaniel D. Wood



I am A Flame - Mark Burt
Third Place Fall Art Winner



(Limbo)

I stand at the gates of hell
with a stone-cold .45 in my hand.
"Abandon Hope"
The same inscription is on my gun.
I can't remember if is was
revenge
salvation
or boredom
that brought me here
but I know it's one of these.
I stand and wait an eternity
and soon a lictor
that smells of black coffee
ushers me in
and I descend.

(First Circle)

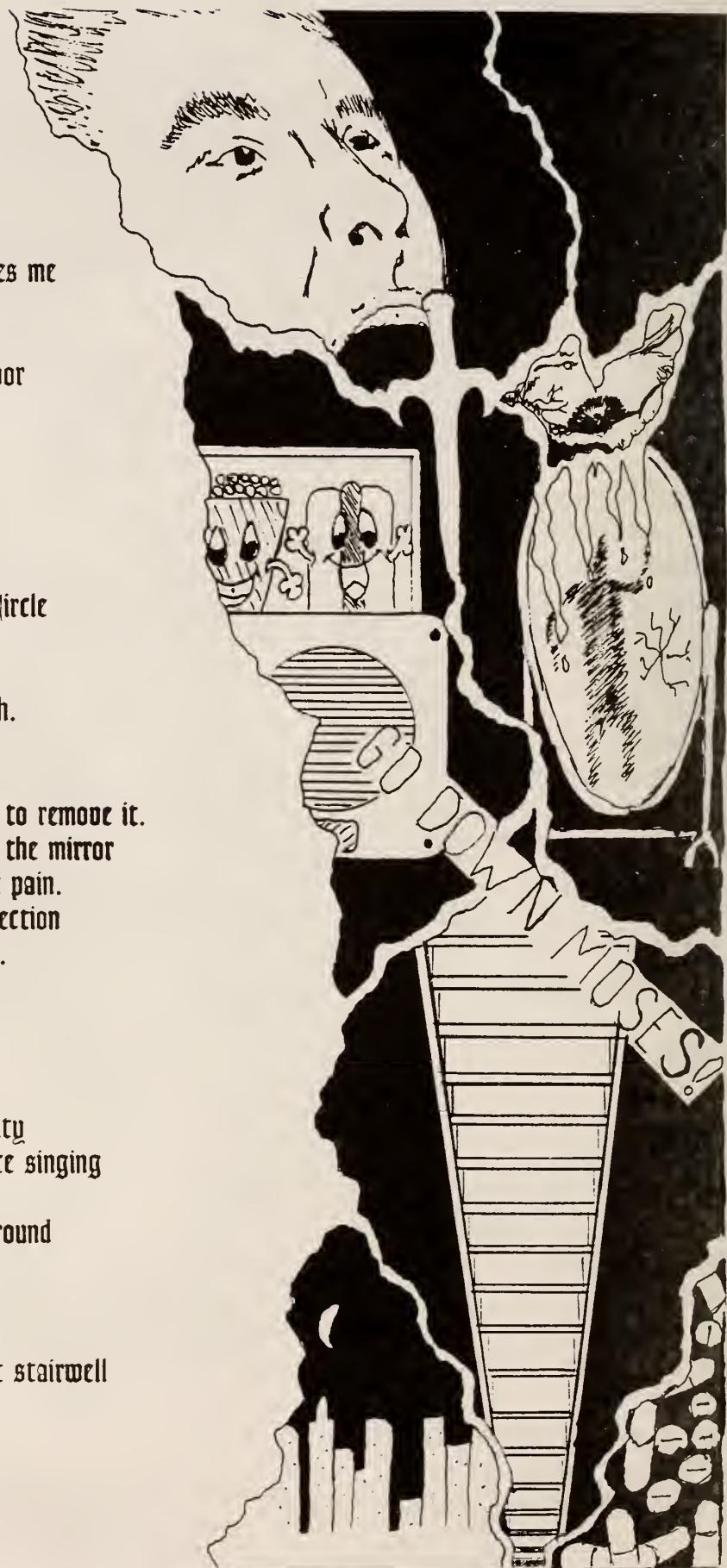
The frigid air of the First Circle
is amniotic fluid
that hits me like tokes of pot
The thunder isn't thunder
and I'm standing
in a pool of my own blood.
I'm standing still.
The acrimonious stench
from the gun
has made me a maudlin acronym
and for the life of me
I can't remember what day of the week it is.



I remember what it's like
to breathe air freshener.
I remember what it's like
to throw up bourbon.
I remember what it's like
to remember.
But the day of the week escapes me
like newborn breath
slipping through my fingers.
A hole of light opens in the floor
and I descend.

(Second Circle)

The tepid air of the Second Circle
is a daydreamer's hormones.
The boy's kiss is like
 putting the pistol in my mouth.
There is a knife protruding
 from my stomach
but I no longer have the desire to remove it.
The liquid ice cream runs down the mirror
 in little rivulets that resemble pain.
I think I can make out my reflection
 but it's just a picture of God.
The reeling sensation
 of a drive-in movie
has turned my stomach into
 a mawkish mishmash
 of something to do with polarity
and there is a cry in the distance singing
 "Go down, Moses!"
My thirteenth birthday rolls around
and I blow out the candles
 with my Socratic bullets
of my empty gun.
I stand in the middle of a great stairwell
that extends up and down
 as far as the eye can see
and I descend.





(Third Circle)

The torrid air of the Third Circle
is the decayed remains
of an ashed-out cigarette.
The microwave is communicating with aliens again
and I grow tired
 of wiping up the excrement of destiny.
Crystal shards of semen grow from the floor
but I'm not sure
 if they are stalagmites or stalactites.
The diestrus continuity of the music
has erased the guilt
 of Mendel's Law
and it seems to be easier to break things
 than to fix them.
The bottle of poppers rests unseen in a back alley
making me miss the lover
 I have never touched.
The fantasy of last night's moon
 rolls down my cheeks
and I'm reluctant to pick up the gun
 from where it has fallen.
I'm not even halfway through this journey
and I'm no longer sure if it was
 revenge
 salvation
 or boredom
that has brought me here
but now I'm stuck in the Third Circle
 unable to descend.

Pretzel Logic

by Sean McGill

As a general rule, I write horror stories—so I know a couple of things about monsters and things that go bump in the night. But I'm not going to talk about imaginary monsters in this paper; I'm going to talk about monsters which exist in our world. Because of equal doses of complacency and ignorance, most people either ignore them or refuse to believe in their existence, but these monsters are ten-fold more dangerous than any I could create, because they are real.

What I am talking about here are extremists. Activists (but not *all* activists, mind you) who go to the far edge of the spectrum when it comes to their respective causes. No matter what your views are on issues like abortion, animal rights, environmental protection, race, homosexuality, religion, and on and on and on and on, there are certain things that you should take into account. For one, harming your fellow human beings should be where activism stops and common sense begins. For myself and others, this is, well . . . it's common sense. I have a lot of personal views on certain topics, but I'm not going to bludgeon someone over the head to get my point across. Being the types of creatures we humans are, that technique *just does not work*. When a nutcase shoots a doctor who performs abortions and claims to be upholding the Biblical truth of "an eye for an eye," the right-to-life movement and others like it are set back years because of one person's ignorance. Whether you agree with that group or not, this is a fact.

Likewise, the same can be said for certain other groups who have seen their causes crippled by the acts of a few. My own views on animal rights activists have been forever altered by an experience concerning a young woman, a can of paint, and her attempt to incorporate said can with my leather jacket. Now, I will say that I find some sense in many of the positions taken by animal rights groups. I *don't* believe that something should die so that the Landers sisters can have some new eyeliner. But I also don't believe that you have right to harm me or my property to get your point across, and that goes for *all* groups. Of course, when confronted by the animal rights activist, my own suggestion that I kill *her* and make a jacket only ticked her off.

And perhaps that shows how many of these problems will come to an end. Groups will continue to scream across picket lines at one another, never once actually *talking* to one another. Occasionally, these shouting matches will become brawls, and each group will go on *Nightline* using childish excuses of "Well, they started it" to justify their brutality.

But that doesn't cut it with me, folks—and I speak for quite a few others as well. Brutality is no more effective than shouting matches when it comes to solving problems. You see, the core of each one of these beliefs resides in the area of *faith*. You have faith that God doesn't want those babies killed. You have faith that animals are your equals and shouldn't be harmed. And on, and on, and on. And whether you want to admit it or not, in the end, you may be completely and utterly *wrong*.

It doesn't matter if you have faith in Buddha, God, pro-choice, or pro-life, whatever. *You may be wrong*. Does that mean this mean that I am suggesting you denounce your beliefs? No. Am I denouncing mine? No. It *does* mean that I accept the fact that I may be wrong.

So, espouse your beliefs, regardless of you're KKK or Greenpeace. It's your right as Americans to do so. But when you choose to do this at the expense of fellow humans, then you become the monsters I spoke of earlier. And you begin to employ pretzel logic. What is pretzel logic?

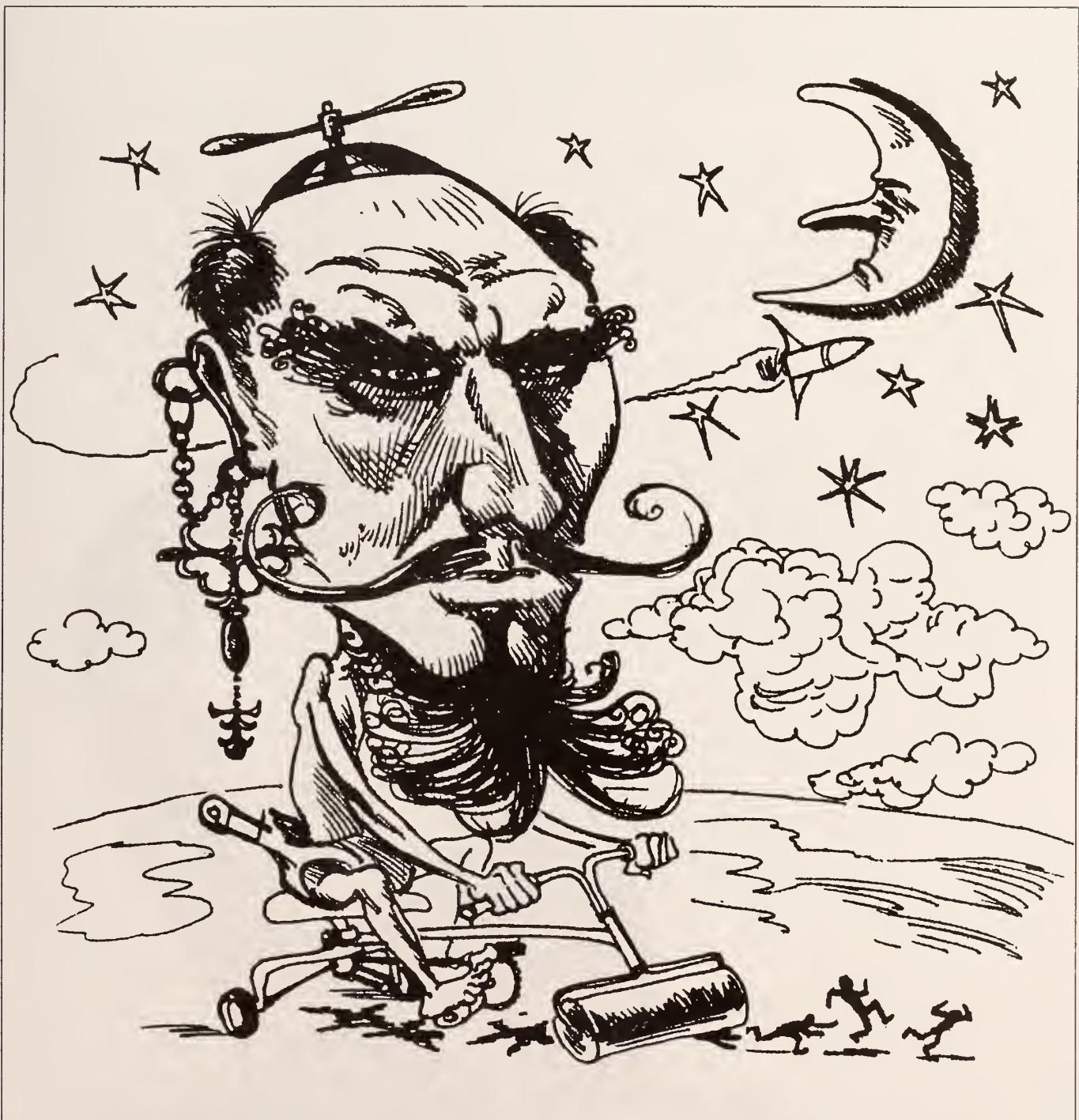
Pretzel logic resulted in a place name Auschwitz.

Pretzel logic says, "He black (or gay, or white, etc.). Let's get him!"

Pretzel logic causes people to loot and burn their own neighborhood to the ground in the name of justice.

Pretzel logic causes people to kill in the name of God.

If you haven't figured it out yet, this is what "pretzel logic" is:
It's twisted.



Ode to Dali - John Shamburger

FM AMERICA

by Frank Lewis

I tuned into the radio
where I heard a country twanger
singing of life's simple pleasures.
I wonder if he wrote about them
sitting on the porch of his mansion.

So I turned the dial.

The a rock and roller began screaming
about corruption in a capitalist nation.

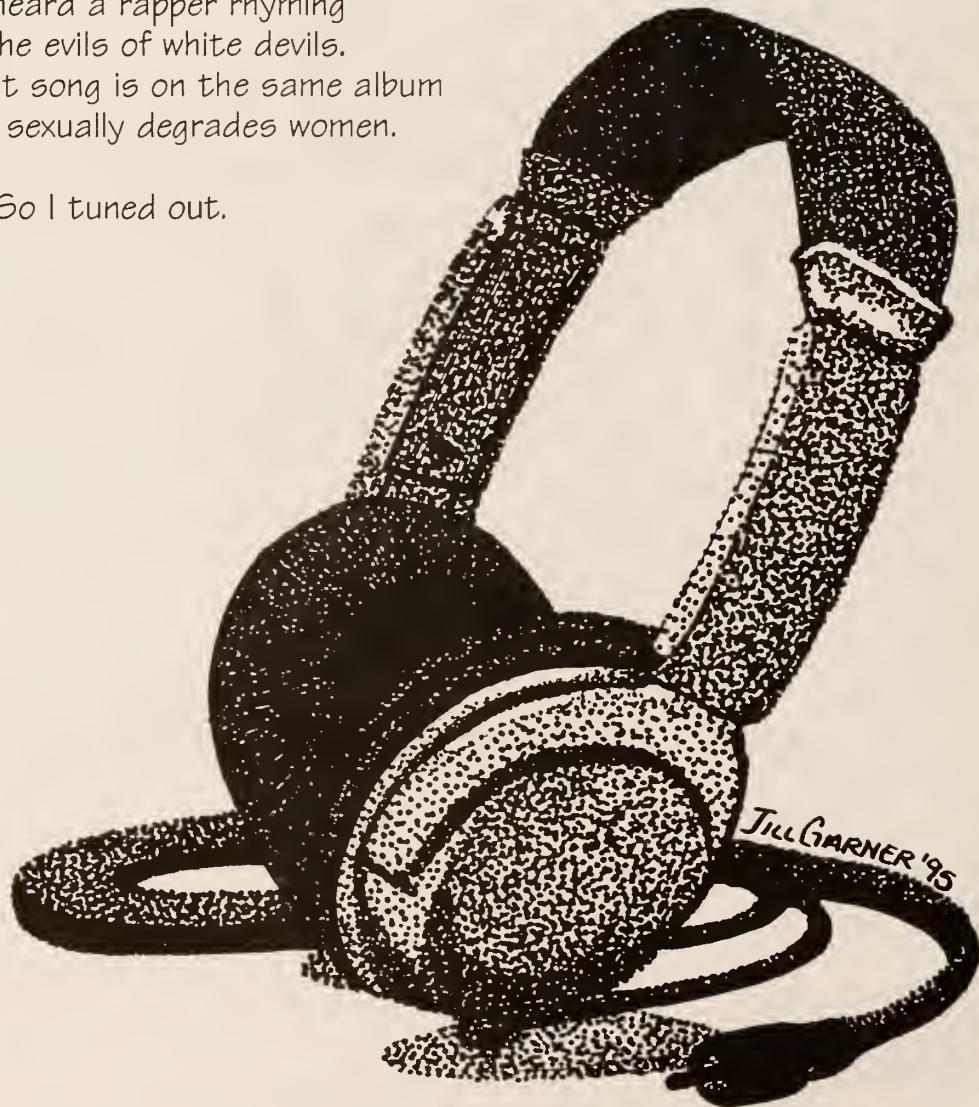
I wonder if she was inspired
while shooting up in her bedroom.

I tuned into another station.

There I heard a rapper rhyming
about the evils of white devils.

I wonder if that song is on the same album
in which he sexually degrades women.

So I tuned out.



In Memory of the French Poet Charles-Pierre Baudelaire by Le Kreaux

I have felt the oppression of the Asphyxiated Brotherhood.
And they know nothing of this "God?"
which they must serve. They no longer remember the delight of
being shipwrecked on the shores of a loved one.
Their tears are hieroglyphic continents where their insectile
emotions are finally free from the monsoon in their pinioned
heart, and now have enough time from the eyes to the ground
to evolve into something beautiful
—that which their heart is denied. yet, they rarely cry;
they just rage and spew their antique venom from the gestures
of their celluloid hands.
... It's so hard to find a bottle of that stuff in the local stores.

hiv—a love poem I by Field Mouse

For the lost ones:

Alex, Baby James, Andy (AA)
David, Chris, Patrick, and
other saints and angels . . .

And to the fighters . . .

be brave, be sweet, be strong . . .
keep fighting . . .

This thing
Plague of the age
of Man, Woman, of Child
Death will feed our hunger
We hunger for truth
For Justice
But in duplicity
we find our intentions betray us
our hearts will find us
in the mire
on the edge
in the briars
desperate to find ourselves
longing to find each other.

21 january 1995

PAGING REALITY

by Marcus Norwood

Paging reality!
A lost soul is on aisle eight.
Clutching a broken valentine
Wetting the floor with futile tears.
Someone might slip!!

Paging reality!!!
You need to see to the poor fellow on aisle eight.
Vain thoughts of reconciliation.
Misconceptions of the past intentions.
Reason lost with sanity.

Paging Life!
We've lost one on aisle eight.

your words so

BIG

eat
up
the

space
between us

more than a phone ever could
(so overrated my dearie)

by
Julie Tisdale

Jill GARNER '95



WHEN GOD DIED

by John Doughty, Jr.

Second Place Fall Fiction Winner

Old habits die hard, especially if they've kept you alive, so I watched the man as he paid for his meal and walked outside Metoyer's Restaurant. He wore an expensive gray suit, a gold Swiss watch, and he clutched a brown felt hat that had a tiny blue feather glistening from the band. The only thing I saw unusual about him was what he did with the hat. He paused outside the door, put the hat on, and then he removed it and crossed the street, allowing the noon sun to blaze down on the shiny dome of his almost bald head. Was the man a marker? I wondered. But no marker would have used such an obvious signal. I would have simply walked down the sidewalk to the left or to the right. Maybe he wasn't a professional.

Alivane Metoyer stepped to my table, and I nodded toward the striding man and asked "Vane? Do you know him?"

"No," she told me. "Never saw him before."

We watched through the plate-glass window as the man entered a white Chevy which was across and slightly down the street. The car matched the description of dozens of cars in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and did not match the cost of his clothing or his watch.

Coincidence, I hoped, as the man drove out of sight, but after having survived fifteen years as a Mossad *katsa*, or intelligence officer, I had no belief in coincidences. Those who did usually got a memorial service at the Israeli government's expense. There was seldom a body for the funeral. But calm down, I told myself. All that's behind you and half a world away. Alivane interrupted my thoughts. "You want you some more turnip greens? How 'bout a piece of pecan pie? I just pulled one out of the oven."

I looked up into her Creole eyes so green they seemed artificial, so bright they seemed illuminated from within. Wrinkles sprouted from the corners of those eyes and traced paths of hard work and worry across her tan face. Her hair, curly and black in her youth, now hung limp and gray. Pecan pies had filled out her once slim body. Resting herself, she extended an arm and clutched the back of a chair with her hand. On that clutching hand, a plain gold ring circled a finger where her long-dead husband had placed it when he pledged his undying love. She had never removed it, allowing it to become like part of her flesh, a now non-removable symbol of love beyond the grave. That love produced eight green-eyed children, and the youngest one, a daughter named Celeste, I considered the most beautiful woman alive. She stirred longings in me which I had not felt since the letter-bomb, intended for me, had ended my wife's life and my career with the Mossad.

"No thank you, Vane," I said.

Mumbling something about me "drying up and blowing away," Alivane walked toward her kitchen, leaving me worried about a different kind of "blowing away" and with my eyes watching through the window.

Across and down the street to the right, a group of tourists stood in front of the Catholic church and peered in wonder at the weathered tomb of a priest beside the front doors, near the sidewalk. On the corner, next to the sidewalk and the tomb, a young man stood in a phone booth, talking into the receiver. He wore new tennis shoes, faded jeans with tears in the knees, and a white tee-shirt emblazoned across the front with the name of a rock group I, of course, had never heard of. He had straight brown hair hanging past his shoulders and probably attended the local university. His lips moved as he talked, but because of the distance, I could not read them. Nothing looked unusual. But I aligned the top of his head with a crack in the booth, just in case I later needed to know his height.

Then his eyes glanced up the street, down the street, and settled on the front of Metoyer's Restaurant. His lips stopped. So did my heart. Then a horrible realization came. Celeste attended graduate school at the university and got out of class at noon. Any minute now she would bounce through the door, plop down at my table, and say, "Hey, Joe. What's happening?"

And before I replied my usual "Nothing" or her mother ordered her standard "Git yore gimlet butt up from Joe Weiler's table and help me wait on customers," a grenade would crash through the window or a bazooka would fire, and we'd all die in an exploding inferno. But this was America. Not Lebanon. Not Palestine or even Israel. Over here, people didn't kill people by the dozens in the name of God. They did it one at a time in the name of money.

If a hit was going down and the young man was a lookout, he would hang up the phone when it happened and casually stroll away. The bald man—if he was a marker—had signaled that the target was indeed the target. Was it me? No. When I had entered the restaurant, I walked right beside the bald man's table. He had not even glanced up. A marker would have dropped something on the floor, pausing me for a moment and getting a close look at my face. Calm down, I told myself. You're paranoid. A hit can't go down in Alivane Metoyer's little restaurant. Can it?

Where would the shot come from? My eyes searched across the street. No open windows in the buildings. A

telephone company van, orange pylons placed front and rear, sat at the curb directly across from the restaurant. Too obvious. Down the street, on the opposite corner from the church, customers walked in and out of the City Bank. Bank robbery? Maybe, but I doubted it. I returned to the obvious.

The van's darkly tinted windows were closed except for a small one on the side facing me, pushed outward for ventilation. Above the van, up on the pole beside it, a yellow plastic tent covered the wires, shielding the linesman from the sun. There was no linesman. A black wire left the tent, trailed down the pole, and entered the closed rear door of the van. My gaze moved to the small window. No telephone company van I ever noticed had such dark windows or hinged ones on the sides. Behind that window, I then saw the muzzle of a large-caliber rifle. I stared wide-eyed, and the rifle attached to the muzzle slowly became the murky but unmistakable form of a Browning fifty-caliber machine gun. I choked on a dumpling.

Lunch-time customers had filled the restaurant, and a single heavy bullet from the Browning would easily smash through the plate-glass window, its intended target, possibly several innocent bystanders, and shatter out the back of the building. A thirty-second burst would destroy the building and everyone in it. Alivane appeared beside me, coffee-pot in hand. "Alivane," I spoke, "sit down."

She filled my cup, turned, and said, "Be right back soon as I fill some of these other folks' cups."

I grabbed her arm, pulled her toward me, and ordered, "Sit down, Alivane!"

She did, settling her bulk into a chair and flashing her green eyes at me. "What's a-matter with you, Joe Weiler. You look like you fit to bust. You been comin' in here for a year and I ain't never seen you look like that and act like this."

I leaned forward. "Alivane, don't be frightened—"

"Frightened? Alivane Metoyer ain't scared of nothin' long as she's got a pot of scalding coffee in her hand!"

"Listen to me," I begged, "or someone is going to die, maybe several someones!"

"What you mean?"

I whispered, "Please don't look but there's a"—her head swiveled—"Alivane! Look at me!"

She did, her eyes wide, her voice saying, "Joe Weiler, you gone crazy for shore."

"I'm not crazy," I stated, "and I know what I'm talking about."

"Okayokay," she muttered, "spit out your mouth what you got to say."

"There's a telephone company van parked across the street," I told her as I looked past her worried gray head to the black muzzle and then down the street to the young man still talking on the phone. "Do you remember seeing it?"

"It was there when I opened this morning."

"It has a fifty-caliber machine gun inside it aimed at one of your customers."

Her face suddenly looked like an owl with tan feathers and extremely wide green eyes. "Oh, Lordy, Lordy, Joe Weiler, you *are* crazy."

"For God's sake, Alivane, I am *not* crazy."

She turned pale. "You *ain't*?"

"No. It's there, and any minute it's going to fire."

"Oh, Lordy, Lordy, what we gonna do?"

"If you can stay calm, we'll stop it before someone gets killed."

She sat her coffee-pot-weapon on the table between us and started wringing her hands. "Lordy, Lordy, how we gonna do that?"

I nodded my head toward the table behind her. "A bald-headed man sat there. Do you remember him? He wore an expensive gray suit."

Her hands got still, and her face turned tan again. "He had a hat?"

"Yes. Now think. He would have talked to one of the other customers. He might simply have dropped his fork when that customer walked by and said, 'Excuse me.' That customer is the target."

Alivane leaned toward me. "Joe Weiler," she said, "I always knew you was more than just a white man that goo-goo-eyed my daughter. Over there," she then whispered, "against the wall. The dirty-old-man with the blond."

I caught her inference about my age and her daughter's, but I said nothing about that subject. And I had no need to look toward the man's table. From Mossad training and actual practice, I could have filled out a report describing almost every customer in the restaurant, what they ate, how they liked it, and what I overheard them saying to each other. The dirty-old-man was over sixty, had a neck-tuck, dyed black hair, wore a blue shirt, matching pants, and had a gold chain around his neck. He owned a bar in New Orleans. The red beans and rice he shoveled down his throat rated "as good as anything in the French Quarter."

The blond was barely twenty-one, had breast implants, wore a slinky, too-tight pants suit that matched her escort's too-black hair, and had fake diamonds around her neck, fingers, wrists, and dangling from her ears. She was

a stripper. The Natchitoches meat pie she daintily munched tasted "Awesome, totally awesome."

"What happened?" I asked Alivane.

"The bald-headed man got up and went over to their table. I didn't hear what he said, but the dirty-old-man said, 'No, you're mistaken; I'm from San Francisco.' "

Knowing the target, I now knew what kept him alive. Two tables were between him and the window. An elderly couple from Atlanta sat at one; around the other one, nearest the window, four college students did more talking about sex and teachers than eating. The moment those tables emptied or everyone leaned back at the same time or the dirty-old-man stood up to go to the restroom, he was dead.

The Natchitoches fire station was one block down; the police station was two blocks over. "Alivane, when I stand up, go call the fire department. Tell them your kitchen's on fire. Call them direct; don't dial nine-one-one."

"Why?"

"There's a machine gun in that van, and there's probably a sub-machine gun in a car down the street. If the cops get here first, a bunch of Natchitoches's finest are dead." I looked into her staring green eyes and added, "Do you have a pistol?"

"Yeah. Behind the counter."

"What kind?"

"A thirty-eight. Smith and Wesson."

"When I walk by your counter, headed outside, hand it to me. Make sure it's loaded. Okay?"

"Okay," she answered. Then she said, "Joe Weiler, do you know what you're doing?"

"Yes," I replied and stood up.

So did Alivane, knocking over her chair.

I walked to the target's table, said, "Hi. Mind if I sit down?" and sat down.

"Hey, buddy," the man muttered. "Move it!"

There was an overpowering odor of cheap cologne and perfume about the couple. Behind the blond's blue contacts, I saw brown, the same color as the roots of her hair. At the roots of the man's hair, I saw gray. But he saw red, and was about to rise. "Relax," I told him. "I mean you no harm. In fact," I added, "it's the opposite; I'm here to save you."

He settled back in his chair, and his eyes shifted around the room. "What do you mean?" he growled.

"I'll be truthful with you," I told him. "Someone wants you dead, and I don't want it to happen in my friend's restaurant. Personally, I think the world would probably be better off with you dead."

He stared at me for a long angry moment while my mind churned over what I had told him. How many times had I heard those words?: "Joe, the world will be better off with this guy dead—or that guy dead—or those guys dead." Whose world? We killed them in the name of our God, and they killed us in the name of theirs. When would it end? When God was dead?

"Go to hell," the man snapped and started to rise again.

"If you stand," I said, "you will die."

He sat down, shaking with fear, now, and sweat beading and then dripping down the wrinkles around his sunken eyes. "How do I know you're telling the truth?"

"Look past my head at the van across the street. Try not to stare. Pay particular attention to what's behind the small window in the side."

He did, and his eyes and his mouth suddenly opened wide and his chin dropped.

"Look down!" I ordered.

His eyes, terrified now, twitched back and forth from me to the blond. "What . . . what do you want?"

"I've already told you. But there's one more thing: Why do they want to kill you?"

The blond's long-nailed and sparkling fingers moved over and touched his hand. "Tell him," she said.

He fingered the butts in the ashtray. Then he took a pack of cigarettes from the pocket of the blue shirt, barely managed to light one, and exhaled nervously. "It's . . . it was a cocaine deal. I ripped them off."

"Them? Names?"

"Just somebody on a payphone. Always a different somebody and always a different phone. We . . . we used a drop. Always different."

I described the bald-headed man and the young man on the phone. "Know them?"

The black head and the blond head both shook.

Down the street, a siren wailed. "That's a fire truck," I said. "It will stop outside, directly out front. When it does, you're safe." I pointed to the back door. "Go through there; it leads to the alley."

They both nodded their heads. The siren drew closer, piercing the stony silence between us. I suddenly spoke: "Don't forget to pay the check; leave it on the table."

He pulled out a thick wallet, extracted a twenty, and dropped it beside his plate.

"Not enough," I said.

"How much?"

"A thousand should cover it."

Without a word of protest, he slid ten hundreds across the table, and I palmed them. The siren stopped behind me, shrieking, and red lights flashed over the two worried faces in front of me. The other customers rose to their feet, muttering in confusion and staring out the window. I said, "Now, go. And walk, don't run."

They got up, flipping over their chairs, and headed for the back door. "Fire!" someone screamed, and a mass of people followed the couple out the back door, another mass exited the side door, and still others followed me to the front. I handed Alivane the hundreds and said, "The dirty-old-man was a big tipper."

Alivane handed me her pistol. "For God's sake, be careful."

"God doesn't have anything to do with this," I informed her. "It's in the name of money."

Out the door I went in a stream of people flowing around a fireman and grasped the butt, holding it and hiding it at the same time, and followed the flow past the firetruck. Across the street, a man wearing telephone company overalls exited the rear of the van and slammed the door. He was clearly in his twenties, well built, and had a black crew-cut. U.S. Marine or Navy Seal with a side-line job, I guessed, and I etched his face into my memory. When he strolled past a wall, I marked his height against a broken brick. Down at his side, the magazine of an Uzi protruded from behind his leg. I matched his stride as he walked, seemingly without a care in the world, toward the Catholic church.

At the church, the young man in the phone booth was now crossing the intersection, headed for my side of the street. Two buildings down from me, a car pulled slowly away from the curb, stopped in the intersection, and the young man got inside. I looked over to the man with the Uzi and caught him looking at me as we both walked away from the chaos behind us. I could have killed him then, but I didn't. I stopped. He surely recognized me as the man who had sat at his target's table, and he might could have killed me then. But he didn't try. He kept walking.

He reached the church, stepped into the street, and got in the car. Before he closed the door, he stared at me for a long moment, etching my face into his memory, I knew.

They drove away and passed two wailing, flashing patrol cars headed in my direction. The patrol cars stopped in the middle of the street beside me and out poured cops. I pushed Alivane's pistol all the way down in my pocket, started walking across the street toward the van, and yelled at one of the cops, "Hey! Over here!"

"Can't stop to talk, Mister! We got a fire!"

By then, the firemen were rolling up hoses. I pointed out that fact to the young policeman and told him, "It wasn't a fire at all; it was an attempted murder." He followed me to the van, and I jerked open the rear door and said, "With that."

There sat the Browning on its tripod like a macabre spacecraft, its muzzle pointed out the small window and a huge belt of ammunition leading down to a black metal box on the floor. "Oh my God," groaned the policeman, and he pulled out his revolver and shouted, "Up with your hands!"

"Wait just a minute," I complained. Then I saw the trembling muzzle of his revolver passing back and forth across my belly. Up went my hands.

"Turn around! Grab the roof of the van!"

He patted me down, found Alivane's pistol, and stepped back. "Make one wrong move and you're dead."

His fellow patrolmen noticed his drawn weapon and soon had me handcuffed and surrounded. Their amazed eyes moved from me to the Browning inside the van, and I counted five nervous revolvers aimed at my belly. "He tried to murder somebody," the first officer announced. "With that!" he added, meaning the Browning.

"No, no" I explained. "I prevented a murder! Go ask Alivane Metoyer!"

The street around us and the still-wailing and flashing patrol cars and fire truck had now filled with gawking and gasping employees and customers of every downtown business and all of the helmet-clad firemen that had arrived on the truck. There at the edge of the crowd appeared Celeste, her hands on the hips of her jeans, her breasts quivering behind a green blouse that matched her eyes, and those eyes glaring at me.

"Celeste! Tell them!"

"Joe Weiler, why did you do this?"

A cop stepped over to her. "Do you know this man, Miss Metoyer?"

"Yes. Right before my momma fainted, she said, 'Joe Weiler did it.' "

The cop removed a little card from his wallet and returned to me. "You have the right to remain silent. . . ."

Oh God, I thought, suppose Alivane has had a heart attack.

But the crowd unexpectedly parted and, pushing and shoving and wiping her face with a wet cloth, up stepped Alivane. "Hold it!" she yelled. "You've got the wrong man! He stopped a murder; maybe two or three murders!"

The first officer's face fell. "You sure?"

"Yes," Alivane answered and grabbed her pistol from his hand. "Give me my gun."

They removed the handcuffs, and Celeste stood there, her hands still on her hips but her eyes now staring at me in curiosity. I knew she would have questions for which I would not want to provide answers.

An hour later, Alivane and I sat at our original table, surrounded by interrogating detectives. Celeste glanced frequently at me and served us all coffee and kept the cups filled. Outside the window, the streets were cleared, the van and Alivane's front doors enclosed with yellow crime-scene tape. A fingerprint crew had dusted the the dirty-old-man and the blond's table for prints, found them everywhere, and had moved to the bald-headed man's table. They would find nothing, I knew. He surely used only one hand, touched only his fork and glass, and would have wiped them clean before he left.

The chief of detectives, an all-business and efficient man in his thirties with a once-lean military body showing the effects of his wife's and Alivane's cooking, dropped his notebook on the table and leaned back in his chair. He removed his glasses, started wiping them, and looked me over. "Let me get this straight," he abruptly stated. "You've not only given us the make and model of both cars involved, you gave us their license plate numbers, and you also gave us a physical description of everyone involved down to . . . What did you say?"

"One inch and five pounds."

"That's what I thought you said." He put the glasses back on and continued: "Then you tell us the occupation of two of the subjects—and their home town, I might add—and the probable occupation of two others. You then followed all those revelations with the reason for the hit—'Unprofessional,' you called it—and then you followed that with a discussion of what everybody ate and how they liked it and what they smelled like and who had cosmetic surgery and who wore fake jewelry and who didn't. Is that correct?"

"Yes," I answered and took a sip of coffee. Behind the detective, Celeste stood there listening. I wished she would leave, go in the kitchen, go somewhere. I knew what was on the detective's mind and where his questioning would lead. My past, it seemed, had traveled half-way around the world to haunt me.

"Mister . . . Weiler? . . ."

"Yes."

"I've been taking statements for years and no other witness has ever provided such detailed information." He removed his glasses again. "And no other witness has ever stopped four cold-blooded killers armed with machine guns. Just who the hell are you?"

"Joseph Weiler."

"Yes, and I'm the Pope. You said you were from Israel? Israeli army? Retired colonel?"

"Yes."

"Mighty young for a colonel."

"I'm forty."

"Mister, I spent four years in the army criminal investigation division. Most of that four years involved the Middle East. I think I know who or rather *what* you are."

I muttered, "Clear the room."

He nodded his head, and the men around him lift, followed by Alivane. Celeste filled our cups and left with a glance back at me. The detective and I sipped our coffee in silence. Mine tasted bitter. He finally put down his cup. "You're Mossad."

I glanced down at the notebook on the table between us. "Does it go in your report?"

"No. It won't leave this room."

"Yes. I'm a Mossad katsa. And I am retired. No one must know."

His expression had not changed, as if I had told him I sold insurance. "Don't worry. I'll make up a story; tell them you're afraid of terrorists or something like that." Then his face changed into almost disbelief. "Wow. All that time over there and I never even *talked* to a katsa—that I know of."

"You did."

He stared at me through the steam rising from his cup. "Were you there when the bomb went off in—"

"Please," I interrupted. "All that's behind me. I want it to stay there."

"Wow," he said again. "Right here in . . . What in hell are you doing in Natchitoches, Louisiana?"

"I was born here. My parents emigrated to Israel when I was fifteen. I live on my grandparents' farm; it's mine now."

At that moment, I wanted out of that room, out of the restaurant, out of Natchitoches, and back on my grandparents' farm—my home. "Are you through with me?"

"Yes," he said, and I heard him add to my back as I walked away, "I'll call if I need you."

I left with only a nod of goodbye to Alivane and Celeste and drove out of town, following the meandering road along Cane River Lake. The town gave way to scattered oak-shaded houses perched on the bank of the lake, and fields of corn and cotton spread toward the gray horizon, flashing me glimpses down somehow secretive, dark green

and perfectly parallel rows. The clouds above me rolled black as my mood, and the surface of Cane River Lake suddenly shimmered white splashes, like God had dropped a million pebbles. I turned on the wipers, slowed, and finally stopped.

In the midst of wind-whipped trees I had climbed as a child, the old house sat solidly before me, curtains billowing out of the open window of what had once been my grandparents' bedroom, and rain peppering down the tin roof and pouring out of gutters on both sides of the porch. I could see my mother and father in a swing at the edge of the porch, watching as my brother and I played marbles in a patch of bare dirt beside the sidewalk. But the swing had disappeared long ago, grass had covered the dirt, and my mother, my father, and my brother lay in graves beside my wife. All dead in the name of someone's God.

Through a rain-splattered windshield and tear-filled eyes, I looked beyond the house and the memories and down my own dark green and perfectly parallel rows stretching toward my own gray horizon. This, yes, *this* is the promised land, I knew. And the days of killing in the name of God were over, at least for me.

The next day I watched through Alivane's window for Celeste to stroll by. She did, whistling a tune and with her jean-clad legs striding like she owned the sidewalk. God, I loved her, I then realized. But, sorrowfully, I also realized the impossibility of her love in return. A few seconds later, she plopped down at my table and said, "Hey, Joe. What's happening?"

"Nothing," I answered and tried to hide my relief that our everyday-at-noon routine had not changed.

Alivane walked by, her arms lined with plates heaped with food. She said not a word.

"Eat slowly," Celeste ordered me. "After I've helped Momma wait on customers, I'll join you."

I stopped eating altogether. Thirty minutes later, Celeste put a glass of tea and a plate of fried chicken and mashed potatoes on my table. Then she sat down. She pulled her chair closer to the table and said, "Are we going to have any excitement today?"

"I certainly hope not."

"Good," she said and started eating.

We made small talk while we ate, and when she finished a chicken leg, she pointed the bone at me. "Joe, do you know something?"

"What?"

"You've been coming in here talking to me for about a year. Right?"

"Right."

"I've been sitting at your table talking to you for more than six months. Right?"

"Right."

"Well," she said and shook the bone at me, "you know damned near everything there is to know about me, and most of what I know about you, I found out *yesterday*."

"I'm sorry."

"You should be." She gnawed on the bone for a minute and then said, "There's one thing I *really* want to know about you."

"What's that?" I asked and expected the worst.

"Why have you never asked me for a date?"

I choked on cornbread. "What?"

"Do you think I'm too young? I'm twenty-six. Fourteen years younger than you, but my daddy was twenty years older than my momma."

"I'm . . . I'm . . ."

"Gay?"

"No."

"Well, what?"

"It's . . . It's . . ."

"Is it because I'm Catholic and you're Jewish?"

"No. I'm not sure I believe in God."

"Is it because I'm part black and you're white?"

"Of course not."

"You scared of me?"

That was close to the truth, but I summoned courage. "Would . . . would you go out with me?"

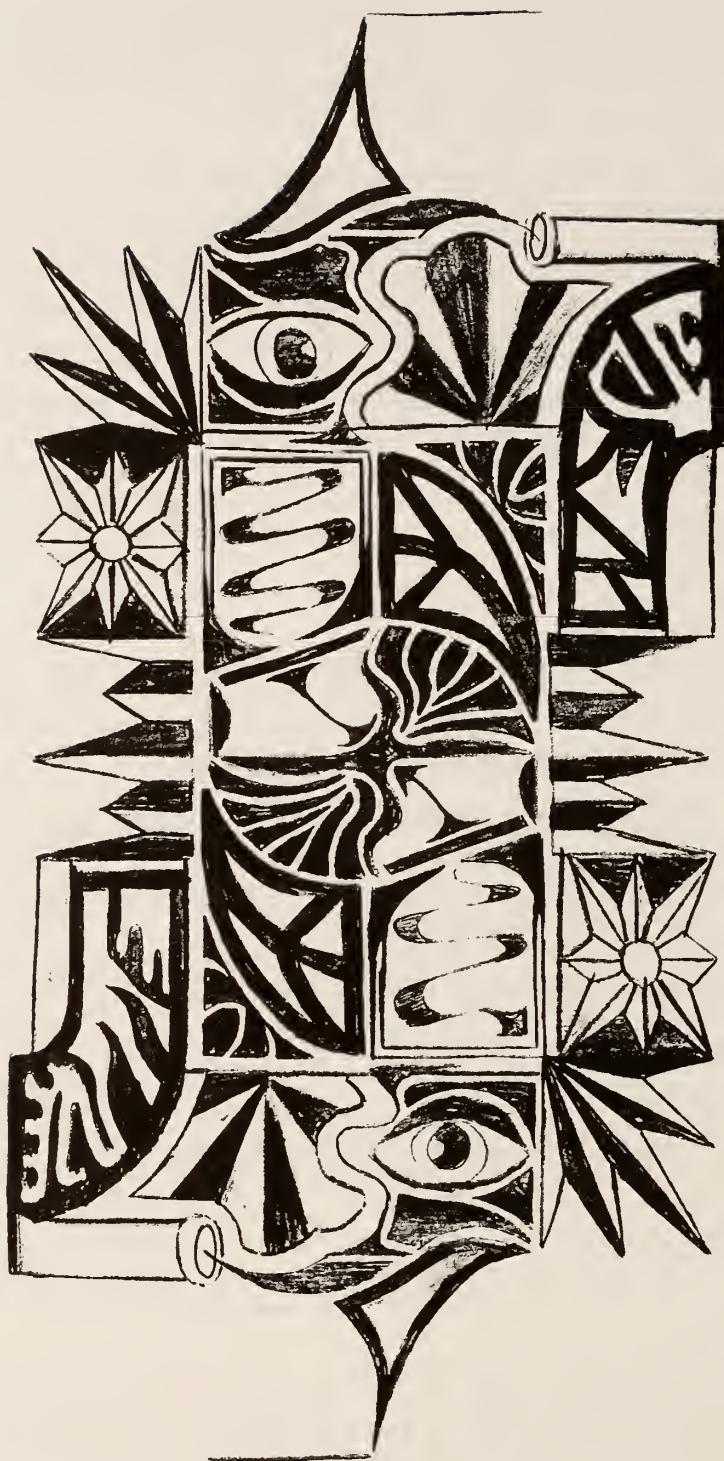
She pointed the bone toward my plate. "I might, and then again, I might not. Eat."

We finished, relaxed in our chairs, and sipped coffee. She said, "Joe?"

"What?"

"There's one more thing I want to know. Why did you do what you did yesterday?"

Those green eyes seemingly looked into my soul, and I answered, "I did it in the name of love."



Confusion - Keith Elliot

Untitled

by Julie Tisdale

Every minute i'm with her
it clings to me more
her smell-
so spicy

personal-
her

Sweating-
i smell it from my pores-
her-
pleasure-being so close

One day
driving to New Orleans
Her and me
Her-filling the car
clogging my nose and mouth-
choking me.
i couldn't roll the window down
for the rain-
falling in single drops
running into rivulets down the window

So i can't smell myself for her
-lost-
unable to leave her
for even a moment
to find it

because of that thing- That Thing
confused people call love
others- obsession
me- lonely rain falling in single
drops
running into rivulets

Vulnerability
by W. Richard May

Screaming Words
Echo against a
Tender Heart
Ripped With a
Rusted Butterknife
Thrown upon the
Wooden Floor
Covered with
Bright Crimson
Dropped into an
Empty Canyon.

Asphalt Blues

by Tanya Bertrand
Second Place Fall Poetry Winner

I took the old highway south,
asphalt cracked and crumbling.

I ride on
through the cane fields green in Summertime,
through the cotton fields speckled in Fall.

I see ghosts in grey -
Confederate boots a marching.

I ride on
as they tromp through the marsh in the mist,
Spirits heed the battle call.

The red dirt hills rise behind me.
Pines drip needles like tears.

I ride on
The black mud delta is my destination.
Through the moist earth push the twisted oak trees tall.

And the spillway bridge rocks me
as I look down into the basin.

I ride on
as the moss sways over gumbo-green water
where the 'gators snap and the cypress sprawl.

I'm heading home
through a way of life that's dying
to a way of life I used to call my own.

roll by
side.

My rear view mirror faces North
and all the things
from which I sprang forth

on either
As I ride.

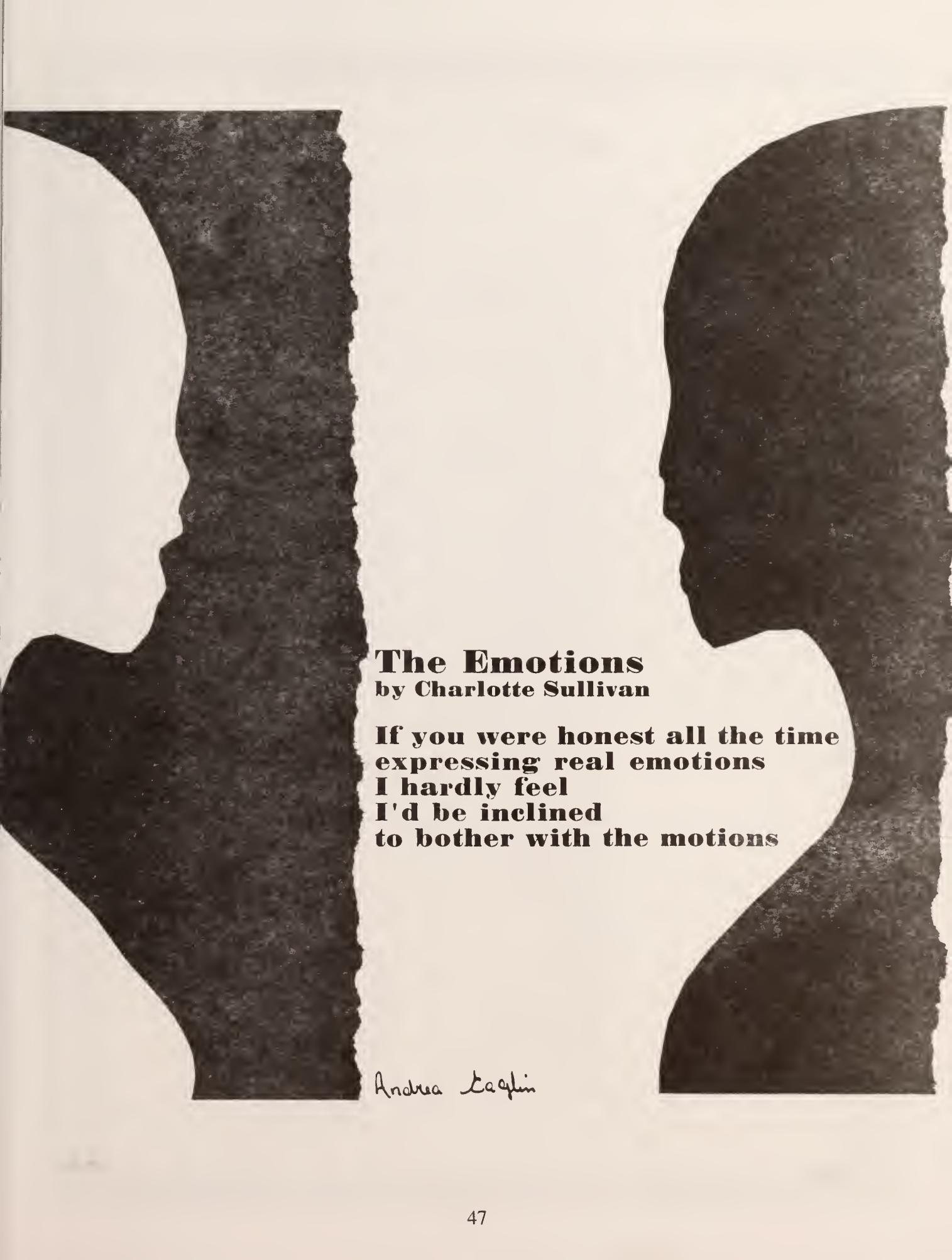
PAATING SHOTS

by W. Richard May

REWIND — FREEZE FRAME
Graceful
Mississippi Memories
Entwined with
Words of Wisdom
Not as easy as
Once thought
Circular placements
Signify binding of
Minds and pieces
Tumble from
Hand to Page
Loose — Disconnected
Developing patterns
Spinning — Weaving
Tapestries of words
Beautifully Controlled
Agony revealed
But still hidden
Enshrouded in
the Myst'ry of
Ms. Emily and Robert
Divinely inspired by
Butterknives and Shoestring
Some poet — Some not
Developing — Aspiring
Pursuing New Roads
with Dashes
Continuing onward
Waiting
Still waiting
Clinging to
Words of Wisdom
Entwined with Mississippi Memories
Fleeting
FREEZE FRAME — FAST FORWARD



Trapped Within - Renee Foote



The Emotions

by Charlotte Sullivan

**If you were honest all the time
expressing real emotions
I hardly feel
I'd be inclined
to bother with the motions**

Andrea Taglin

NAWLINS

by Field Mouse

**RIVER CITY
CARRIES ME AWAY
NIGHT FALLS UNNOTICED
IN A PLACE UNTouched
BY ANXIETY—PROPRIETY
OR SOBRIETY
DARKNESS AND ITS CREATURES
COMMON FEATURES
BY LAMPLIGHT
TEE-SHIRT TIGHT
REST ON THE SIDEWALK
FOR THE BOY ON THE SIDE
THE OTHER SIDE
OF THE STREET
OF THE SOUARE
WILL TAKE YOU THERE
OR LET YOU GO
FOR FIFTY OR SO
PIMP DOWN DECATUR
JUST A BIT LATER
COLLECTS HIS THOUGHTS
AND YOUR DOLLARS
FOR A LITTLE SMACK, A SLAP
(OR MAYBE AN 8-BALL)
TIGHT JEANS AND FIFTIES QUEENS
RULE THE QUARTER
WITH IMMUNITY
WITH IMPUNITY
HUSTLERS DANCE
STUDS PRANCE
AS THE EXPLOITS
OF EXPLOITATION
ARE DETAILED
BEFORE
YOUR EYES
SOFT CRIES
INNOCENCE
FALLS—RAPED RAW
WITH INDIFFERENCE
WITHOUT WARNING
IN A PLACE—A THOUGHT—
NAWLINS**

MARDI GRAS 1989

Sexual Harassment, Corporate Intrigue, and the Influences of the Thriller in Barry Levinson's Disclosure (1994)

by Jennifer Rowland

Barry Levinson's 1994 film, Disclosure, based on Michael Crichton's novel, provides audiences with a technological thriller in the style of Alfred Hitchcock. Levinson's direction creates tension and concern in the audience, drawing them ever tightly into the saga of Tom Sanders' confrontation with sexual harassment and corporate intrigue. Using excellent camera movement, angles, and scenery, Levinson represents the changing status of the film's protagonist, Tom Sanders (Michael Douglas), and the antagonist, Meredith Johnson (Demi Moore). Throughout the entire film, the technological advances of computers play an integral role, particularly since most of the action takes place at a computer manufacturing corporation.

The opening of the film emphasizes its technological focus, for the opening credits scroll across the screen as they would appear if someone typed them into a computer. Before we meet any of the characters, Levinson presents us with an extreme close-up of a computer screen with a large "e" spinning on a black background, a signal that someone has received email, a signal that will gain significance as the film progresses. A young girl, Sanders' daughter, reads the message and proceeds to call, "Dad, you got e-mail!" She runs off-screen, and Levinson takes this opportunity to pan across the rooms of the house, backed by the unseen conversations of this happy, technologically advanced family. Their home is finely decorated, not too ostentatious, but elegant enough to inform the audience that this family has a comfortable income. While the rooms look "lived-in," they retain just enough neatness to reflect the orderliness of the Sanders' lives. Levinson continues to demonstrate the family's orderly life through a series of symmetrical shots. The family walks outside their home in a line, the children, looking remarkably alike, pulling on their jackets as Tom straightens his tie.

This sense of symmetry comes across strongly in the cross-cutting shots of Tom and his wife getting into their Jeep Cherokee. The wife enters first, and Levinson gives us an extreme close-up of her hand pulling the door closed. We immediately cross-cut to Tom's hand closing his car door as well. Within seconds, this orderly family, not without its minor squabbles, has dropped off the children and headed directly for the ferry, which Tom arrives just in time to catch, raising his arms in Olympic fashion as he leaps onto the deck. The family's orderly life can not help but improve, for we learn that Tom expects to garner a promotion at work.

We soon learn, however, that the family's happiness may be endangered as Levinson foreshadows Tom's impending difficulties at work by seating him next to an unemployed executive from a computing firm. Placing Tom in the foreground of the shot, with his cellular phone to his ear, and placing the unemployed man in the background, Levinson emphasizes the nearness of tragedy for Tom. The man serves as a reminder of the uncertainty of the business world even as Tom discusses matters with his associates. Tom's uncertainty about his job security continues when he arrives at work. His co-workers detail rumors to him implying that another person received the promotion, and his secretary informs him that the CEO, Bob Garvin, made a visit to his office before Tom arrived at work. These uncertainties do not prove unfounded, for Tom soon meets the woman who received the promotion in his place, his old flame, Meredith. Both Levinson's plot of sexual tension and harassment and his use of camera angles describe the importance of their previous history.

When Tom first sees Meredith, he does not know who she is, he sees only her bare, well-shaped legs climbing the stairs of the offices; and he stares appreciatively after the dismembered legs and backside (for we do not have a face with which to identify them). Levinson's editing further emphasizes the sexual nature of the plot with an extreme close-up of Tom swatting his secretary's derriere with a file folder. Later, when Tom goes to the CEO's office, we see a low-angle shot with an unidentified foot clad in a "power" high-heeled shoe in the foreground. The camera slowly moves up the woman's leg to capture Tom and Garvin in the shot, than pans right to focus solely on the men as Garvin prepares to introduce Tom and Meredith. At this point Tom turns and the camera swivels to provide a point-of-view shot of Meredith sitting relaxed. Meredith comments on their previous relationship, remarking that Tom "broke my heart," to which Tom replies, "She's exaggerating." His meeting with Meredith raises her to prominence in his thoughts,—a prominence which appears in his discussion with the other members of his division team, Marc, Hunter, and Ted.

Tom and his co-workers discuss their meeting and future with the new promotion, but the conversation soon turns to sex and the concept of women in the workplace. As Tom, Ted, and Marc discuss sexy women and

whether or not Meredith could be considered sexy, the camera excludes Hunter, the only woman in the group. Only when the conversation turns to working women does Hunter enter the discussion. The camera cuts to Hunter, placing her in her own shot and isolating her from the men. She points out the actual position of women with the existence of the corporate glass ceiling. "Work your butt off for ten years for less pay and see the promotion go to some guy with less experience," Hunter summarizes the woman's experience in the work force. Clearly, women lack power in the male-dominated work world.

In the corporate dominion, power becomes an inherent desire. Levinson reflects this desire through his camera movement. Characters in a position of power are filmed from a low-angle, to increase their cinematic dominance. After Meredith sexually harasses Tom, Levinson films her from an extreme low-angle as she stares down from the balcony, screaming threats at the departing Tom, her blouse open and disheveled. Despite her appearance, Meredith's threats regarding Tom's job and life maintain her power as his executive superior. The lawyer Tom hires to sue Meredith for sexual harassment describes the importance of power. "Sexual harassment isn't about sex," Catherine Alvarez says, "it's about power." In a dream sequence, Levinson continues this idea. Tom boards an elevator with the CEO. Garvin compliments Tom on his work, and reaches over to pat Tom on the behind, as football players do. The contact soon changes as Garvin begins to feel the fabric of Tom's jacket, commenting on its texture. Garvin then begins to rub Tom's arms, remarking on their muscular tone. Suddenly Garvin delivers a sexually charged line and approaches Tom with his mouth poised to deliver a French kiss. As this sequence demonstrates, sex and power are tightly intertwined, so intertwined that the sexual plot soon falls by the wayside as Tom focuses on the corporate sabotage at Digicom.

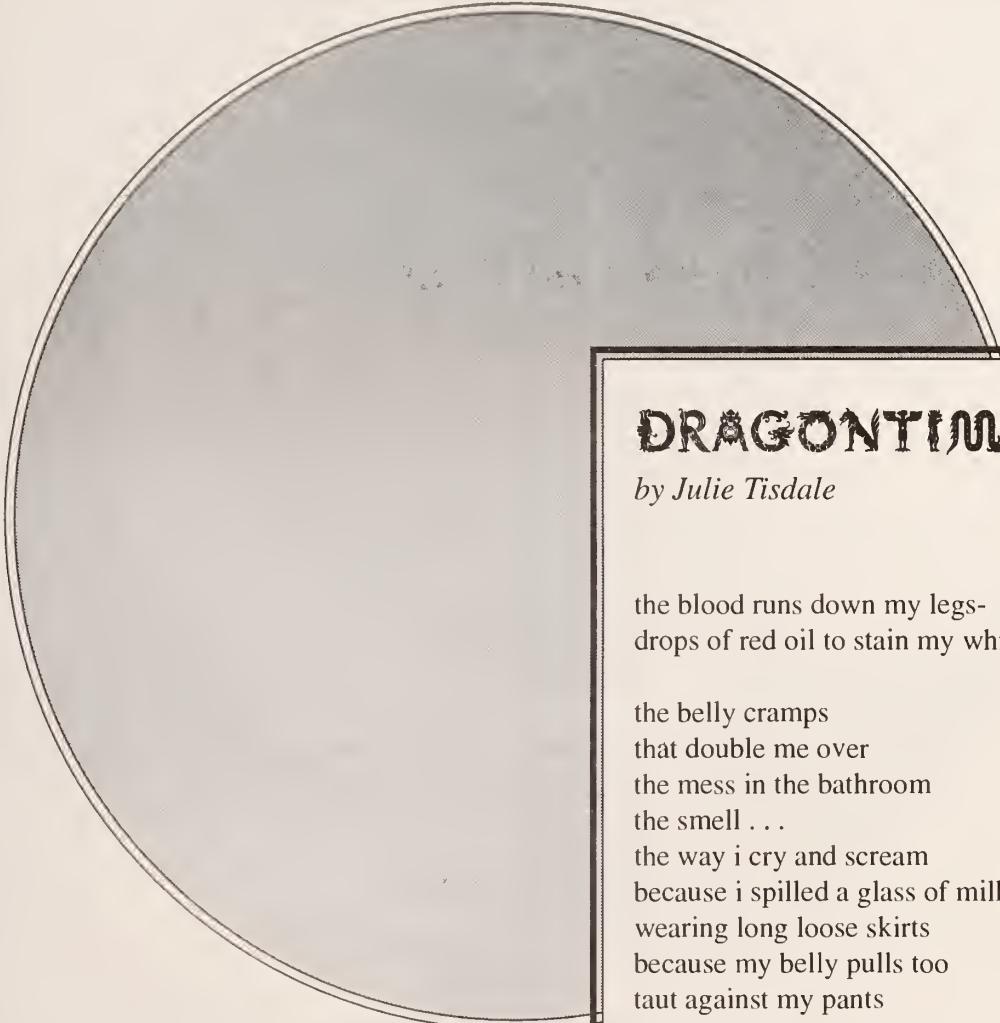
Furious that Tom did not provide her with the sexual satisfaction that she wanted, Meredith sets out to frame Tom and destroy his career. She begins by claiming he sexually harassed her. However, thanks to the technological wonder of the cellular phone, the entire confrontation was captured by John Levin's answering machine, an associate of Tom's. Once her sexual harassment plot fails, Meredith conspires with Garvin and his assistant to set Tom up with the responsibility for the failing drives for the new Arcamax merger. Tom, however, suspects the intrigue, and begins to hatch a scheme of his own to trap Meredith. Levinson uses straight angles to film the scenes of subterfuge and intrigue, for we do not know who will end up in a position of power.

Levinson's sets provide powerful symbolism against the plot of sexual harassment and corporate intrigue. These activities often take place behind closed doors, but at Digicom, every room consists of glass walls with steel frames. Private conversations take place in plain view of the entire corporation, although the thick glass may mute the sound. The office also connects each level with a wrought-iron staircase, weaving its way in a difficult to follow pattern. Characters switch staircases to get to different offices, and the audience may become confused as they attempt to follow the characters' paths. The backdrop of the sets strongly reflects the uncertainties of the business world when sexual harassment and subterfuge arise.

As Levinson unravels his tale, his camera action parallels the fast-moving world of computers. The camera constantly moves, often preceding and anticipating the movements of the characters. In addition, Levinson employs a series of extreme close-ups, particularly when a character uses a piece of advanced technology. In many cases, we only see a part of the character's body as he or she performs tasks. This may represent the dehumanizing aspects of technology, in addition to allowing the audience to see just how to work the computers. One of the few exceptions to Levinson's close-ups occurs when Tom uses the virtual reality database in a client's hotel room. The virtual reality machine allows Levinson to provide the audience with a thriller.

The virtual reality films and records the user's body and places him or her in a simulated archive. Here the person may interact with the files as if they were actual pieces of paper. Tom sneaks into the archive through the virtual reality, creating tension in the audience, for he has also sneaked into the client's room. Thus, Tom may be caught in two ways. Our fears soon become realized as Meredith accesses the system from her office and we see a virtual reality grid-body with her face suddenly appear on the screen, accompanied by a startling soundtrack. As Tom races to read the information before Meredith deletes it, the executives return to their room. Fortunately, in an escape worthy of Hitchcock, Tom escapes discovery.

Levinson's film echoes Hitchcock in other ways as well. He employs a MacGuffin, a red herring; in this case, a series of e-mail notes from A FRIEND, offering advice to Tom on dealing with Meredith and advising him to "Solve the Problem." Our concern over the identity of A FRIEND soon drops with the sexual harassment story, until we are reminded at the end when a co-worker's son reveals that he was A FRIEND. While setting his thriller in a technological sphere, rather than one of psychology or espionage, Levinson delivers suspense, intrigue, and a touch of romance to his audience in the manner of Alfred Hitchcock, the master of suspense.



DRAGONTIME

by Julie Tisdale

the blood runs down my legs-
drops of red oil to stain my white nightgown.

the belly cramps
that double me over
the mess in the bathroom
the smell . . .
the way i cry and scream
because i spilled a glass of milk
wearing long loose skirts
because my belly pulls too
taut against my pants

and you can't love me because i bleed

the blood runs down my legs-
drops of red oil to stain my white nightgown.

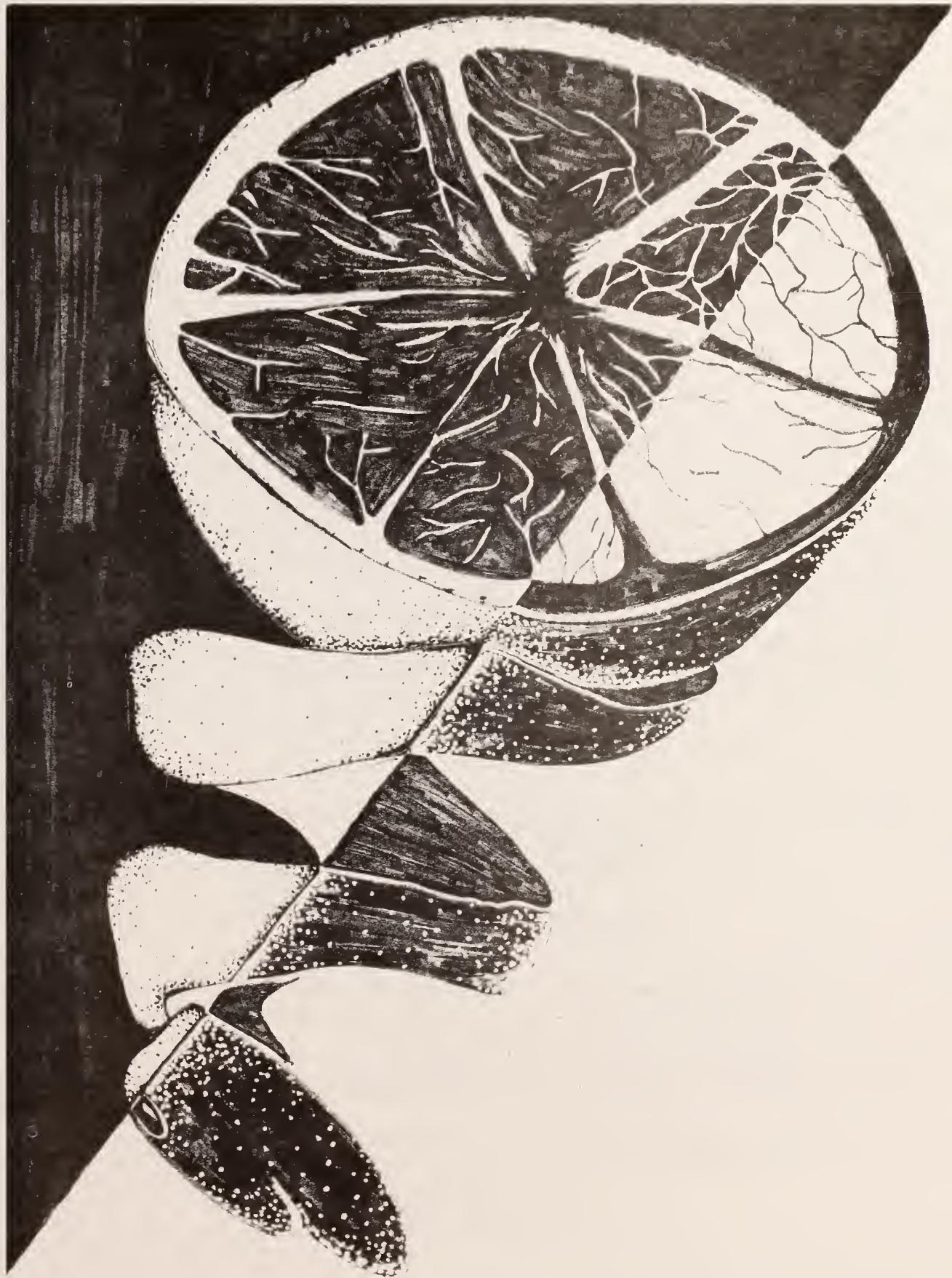
the belly cramps my mother felt
crimson designs on the white tile floor
the red on my fingertips
the smell . . .
my fertility-
waning with the moon
running down my thighs into the earth
the taste . . .
long skirts flowing
screaming into the wind

and you can't love me because I bleed

The Forbidden Fruit

by Le Kreaux

Are you sure it's ripe enough?
Do you know how appalling the dream
of Awareness is?
We could very well be setting up
the angels on our shoulders
for an assassination.
The desire to reach grace beyond the heavens,
which the serpent hissed of,
is shameful enough
to trap us in an irregular metamorphosis.
Yeah, yeah!
—I know the repetitive routine
that has become our shadow
has stained our backs with shivers of hibernation,
but we have no sufficient proof
that it may end that way.
Besides,
with the route you want to take,
we could be biting off more than we can chew.



Woman at 33 - Chiquita

One side too Many

by Matthew Todd

I. transparent pane, where have You been? Your presence sheds light in the midst of dawn's grin
glad to glance upon again
reflections of my own again,
yet transfixed on light behind, I can only dream of
what I have seen

I am here to make a plea on behalf
of a soul now trapped by reality's grasp,
keeping nothing to find,
a slave to mankind,
grant him opposition to his ever-present position,
and take him to the other side

oh, it can be harsh standing near Your orchard,
flies smack Your side like chinese water torture
trapped? perhaps oppressed by doubt
no more on the inside always looking out
perceiving trees and hills, not worthless thrills, my random
access memory has taken its fill

my plea with this: release him, oh bliss
down with the lips of time's fatal kiss
no cause to alarm
I mean You no harm
just open the way; give him hope this day; and I
will leave You, drifting further away

II. it has been endless hours, and You give no reply
I would ask again, but Your answers leave me dry
You mocked with wretched pride,
"no chance to creep inside",
yet Your own judgment shall be set forth in the moment
that You lie

see this wooden treasure, clasped within my hand
now stand up you coward, then You will understand
I aim to smash Your cast;
thus, be free at last
to venture forth upon that road, mistaken distant land

it seems rather chilly, though the sun burns bright
this darkened cloud within seems to bury what is right
did the fate of the open breeze
release hidden keys
or was I blinded by youthful plight

III. why did I break that window?



Tree of Death - John Shamburger

TANNER'S PLACE

by Terry Pleasant
First Place Fall Fiction Winner

The sun was high when four men reined in their horses atop a hill overlooking old man Tanner's ranch. The air was stifling from the heat, and the dust cloud that followed the horses settled over the riders like a sweltering blanket, mixing with sweat to form a grimy paste on each man's face. Gloved hands slapped trail dust from shirts and pants, and the sound of creaking leather filtered through the air as the riders shuffled in their saddles. The crack of a shotgun breach being opened broke the stillness, and the spinning cylinder of a Colt .45 joined moments later. Overhead in a sea of blue, buzzards flew in anticipating circles.

The men sat quietly for awhile, studying the terrain below as their horses snorted and stamped at the ground, welcoming the rest. Beneath dirty brimmed hats, grim features grimaced with anger and determination. One man chewed on a cud of tobacco, spitting a brown, filthy stream now and then, never taking his eyes off the ranch below as he wiped spittle from his mouth with a dirty sleeve. All were a tough breed, each a veteran of the Civil War. Three carried Winchesters, one a double-barreled shotgun. Each wore six-guns strapped to his waist.

They had come armed to kill.

Down below, the ranch was a scene of animal activity. Outside a corral containing a few head of cattle, a dog barked as it ran up and down the fence line, wagging its tail playfully. Near the entrance to a barn, a group of chickens scratched at the ground in search of worms, and around the corner, several hogs wallowed contentedly in the coolness of a mudhole. An old mule ate unconcerned at a pile of hay left for him by its owner, and near him, a goat had its head stuck through the rails of a fence, chewing the vines of a morning glory that had climbed the side of the barn.

The riders scanned the terrain surrounding the ranch. From their position, a beaten path ran from the hill to the barn down below. To the north, south, and east, a thick growth of trees bordered the ranch on three sides. To the west of the house lay the hill and the trail back to a town named Salzburg. But most significant about the hill was that a clear field of view lay open for a man with a rifle to fire at anyone attempting to rush the ranch.

"We should go down there and kill that old bastard right on the spot," Johnny Willis cursed through brown, rotted teeth. "He doesn't scare me one bit."

Beside him on a roan horse, Talon Smith glanced at the young rider. "You ain't scared, boy, because you don't know old man Tanner. He was killing folks when you were just in yore diapers. They say he was one of Grant's best shooters, probably staring down a barrel at us right now."

"That's bullshit!" Colby Wickman argued.

Smith turned to the right where Colby and his brother Jake were sitting on their horses. "If it's bullshit," he replied, "then why don't you just ride yore ass on down there. I bet two bits that old man Tanner will sting yore butt for you and send you packing."

Colby squinted at the ranch, angry that he didn't have the courage to back up his words. He wanted desperately to spur his horse on, find the old man and shoot him dead. But something about the way Smith spoke of Tanner made him wait. After all, he knew they would get the old man, but doing it without getting shot would suit him just fine. "All right," he said, glancing over at his brother. "I'll wait. But I intend to put a hole in that sum bitch."

"You and me both," Smith agreed. He nodded towards the woods to the north and south of the house. "We best come in under cover of the woods. He probably knows we're here already, but he doesn't know what we intend to do. We'll close in on him and attack from the sides. We'll flush him out if he's in the woods, and if he makes a stand in the house, we'll burn him out."

The other three men nodded in agreement. Smith and Johnny Willis would take the woods to the north, Colby and Jake would take the south. They would work their way closer to the house and then trap the old man inside. It would be a snap.

Spurring their horses, the four set off. First they all turned around and headed back the way they had come until they were out of view of the house. Then they split and went north and south, working their way to the woods, walking their horses slowly.

Down below on the ranch, nothing changed. The dog barked, the chickens scratched the earth, and the

hogs lay still in the mud. Overhead, the buzzards continued their patient vigil.

A half hour later, the four men were in position. They tied their horses deep in the woods, and began sneaking in on foot to surprise the old man. It was their intention to kill him dead, then take the gold they had been told about from a drunk who had prospected with Tanner a few years earlier.

Smith and Johnny Willis made their way through the hardwoods, pushing aside briars and stepping carefully over dead limbs on the ground. They were moving cautiously, not taking any chances on being spotted from the ranch. Tanner was old, but Smith knew about the man. He was rawboned tough, and could shoot the eye out of a coyote at five hundred yards. He was a man to be reckoned with.

"Damn!"

Smith turned around, looking back at Willis who was tangled up in a thorny vine. "What the hell, boy? You never been in the woods before?"

"Sure I have," Johnny Willis protested, pulling his sleeve free of the vine. He cursed as he inspected his arm. Several scratch marks bled slowly from ragged wounds. "Just got in the briars, that's all. I'll live."

"Not if you keep making noise, you won't," Smith argued. He turned around and said, "Let's go," and continued on, stepping quietly through the brush. Behind him, Johnny Willis followed, keeping a careful eye out for any briar patches ahead.

Across from Smith and Willis, the Wickman brothers were in the process of doing the same thing, worming their way down through the woods in order to get closer to the ranch. Colby led the way, followed by Jake. Both carried Winchesters and six-shooters, eager to plug away at Tanner.

"I want the first shot," Jake whispered to Colby. "I bet I can nail him good."

"Shut up, Jake," Colby said quietly. "Just be glad I'm letting you come with me. If anybody shoots that sum bitch first, it's going to be me."

"That's not fair. You shot that old Mexican down south last month. I had him dead to rights, but you just butted in and shot him."

"Jake, I swear. If you don't shut up, I'm gonna shoot you too!"

"Better listen to your brother, boy! You'll live longer!"

The brothers froze. Neither moved a muscle. Their eyes wandered quickly as they sought to find the man who had spoken. They knew they were in Tanner's sights, and suddenly the woods became a lot quieter than before. Seconds seemed like hours, and the heat of the day increased ten fold. Sweat left wet trails as it flowed slowly down nervous faces. Beneath ragged hats, two pairs of eyes darted back and forth, searching the underbrush. But they could see nothing but trees and tangles of briars and weeds.

"Where is he?" Jake whispered to Colby, keeping very still. He knew he would be shot if he moved.

"Don't know. . . . Can't see him."

"What do we do?" Jake asked, frightened now that the advantage had turned against him and his brother.

Colby shook his head, still looking into the brush in an effort to spot old man Tanner. Foolishly, he decided that now would be a good time to make tough talk. "We've come for the gold, Tanner. You let us have it, and you can go free. No need to die for money."

Beside Colby, Jake went livid. "Damn! Don't tell him that, not with him got us down his sights!"

"I came for the gold," Colby said, gritting his teeth, "and I intend to get it from that sum bitch."

Suddenly, a shot rang out like thunder. A bullet from a Sharp's fifty caliber caught Colby square in the chest, knocking him flat on the ground. Jake kneeled down beside him and saw a huge hole in his back where the bullet had exited. Blood rushed out like a waterfall from the wound. He didn't last long. He died grasping a handful of grass in his hands.

Stunned at seeing his brother lying dead, Jake went crazy and began firing at the underbrush, still not able to see where the shot had come from. He snapped off several rounds until another fifty caliber bullet tore at his right arm. The impact spun him around, and his rifle went flying in the process. Bright, red blood oozed from the wound as he tried to stop the bleeding with his left hand. He staggered back and forth, started crying like a child, the fight in him suddenly gone. "Don't shoot! Please! . . . Don't shoot!"

"I didn't ask for trouble, son," the voice said again, still hidden in the woods. "You and your kin came looking. I just supplied the rest. Now you got a choice. You can reach for that gun, or you can hightail it out of here and never come back. Cause if you do, I'll bury you by your brother."

Jake held out his good hand in a gesture of surrender. "Okay! . . . Okay! Don't shoot! I'm going. Just . . . Just please bury my brother, won't you?"

"I promise I will, son. And I'll speak over his grave from the good book too."

Jake's head hung down, his breaths coming in deep gasps. "Okay . . . I'm going . . . I'm going." He looked down at Colby, knowing that it would be the last time that he ever saw him. He tried not to look at the way his brother's eyes lay open and lifeless. "So long, Colby. See ya."

Jake turned and headed back towards his horse. His arm hurt bad, but he would live. He was thankful to move on, knowing that a grave wasn't much of a future for a young man to bank on. At least he would have a chance to begin again, and that was better than the grave Colby would have.

When Jake was gone, old man Tanner rose from his position thirty yards to the east of where Colby lay dead. He cradled the big buffalo rifle in his arms, having already reloaded. A big, sharp Bowie knife hung along side his right hip for easy access. He had taken it off a dead Arkansas razorback in a saloon fight. Traces of blood still remained in parts of the handle from the man he had killed years before.

Lane Tanner was seventy years old. Wrinkled trails ran like crow's feet from the corners of his eyes, and his hair hung low to his shoulders, gray and withered from time and battles. The stubble of a beard hid his chin, and along his cheek, a long scar revealed the nature of a man who had fought against his own kind and survived to tell about it. He wore a buckskin shirt and pants, and on his feet, he wore the moccasins given to him by a Comanche chief.

He remained motionless for awhile, just listening, getting a feel of the woods. There had been four men, and now one was dead, the other gone. He gazed through the trees to the north, knowing that the other two men were moving in on his house. He didn't bother to go look at the body of Colby Wickman. The man was dead, shot through the heart. Tanner knew when a bullet left his barrel that something or someone was going to die. Whether it was a deer or a man, the results were always the same. That wasn't what he wanted out of life; it just turned out that way. He was a man of peace, but even a good man has to fight to protect his own.

He turned and faced northeast to leave, but his eyes glanced over to where Colby Wickman lay. He shook his head, then started to walk away. But before he left, he took a moment to look skyward to where a group of circling buzzards had descended to a lower altitude. An omen, he thought silently. Then to no one in particular, he said, "Death comes for the wicked." He walked away quietly, leaving the dead behind in the silence of the woods.

At the sound of the shot that killed Colby Wickman, Talon Smith and Johnny Willis had stopped dead in their tracks. They had crouched quickly, taking cover behind some trees. But the bullet wasn't meant for them.

"Damn!" Smith said as he rose from his position. He knew the sound of a Sharp's fifty caliber, and the only man who could have one was Tanner.

"The brothers must've nailed old man Tanner," Johnny Willis said, grinning hopefully as he stepped from behind a tree. "Those boys are hell cats, I tell you."

Talon Smith turned to face Johnny. He shook his head. "One of them is dead, boy. You heard the shot. It was a Sharp's."

Johnny shook his head nervously. "Don't mean nothing. Could've been Colby or Jake. We ought to go on down there and help 'em out."

Smith turned back around. He double checked his rifle, studying the terrain a moment. He looked to the ranch house seventy yards away, then to his left where the woods stood behind the ranch. "He'll come at us from over there," he told Willis, pointing to the wood line to the east. "We'll beat him there and get the drop on him."

"I want to shoot him right in the ass," Johnny Willis said eagerly, trying to persuade himself that he and Smith were going to succeed.

"Let's just kill the bastard dead, then you can shoot him anywhere you like," Smith snarled, looking back. He turned around and headed towards the east. Johnny Willis followed close behind, swinging his shotgun from side to side nervously. Smith stopped suddenly, whirling around angrily.

"Damn it, boy! Careful with that shotgun, or the only person going to get shot in the ass is me!"

Johnny Willis stepped back, pointing the shotgun off to the side. "Sorry, Talon."

Smith turned around again, shook his head. "Damn!"

The two men set off again, walking slowly through the trees. The sound of their boots crunching on fallen leaves and dead branches seemed loud in the stillness of the forest. They walked as if they were treading on egg shells, their steps more cautious and deliberate now. Knuckles became white as both men gripped their weapons tightly. Sweat ran like little rivers down each man's face. Even under the shade of the trees, the heat was almost unbearable.

As they neared the location where Smith thought would be a good spot to ambush Tanner, he halted, raising his right hand. Willis stopped also, looking around to see if there was any sign of Tanner. He was nervous, and for a moment he thought he saw movement, but it was only his eyes playing tricks on him.

Smith made a gesture to Willis with his hand. Johnny nodded, understanding the signal to find a place to hide. As Smith turned back around, a large gray blur came crashing out of the brush. He screamed as a wide gaping mouth, full of teeth, came crashing down on top of him.

"Arrggg . . . Help me! . . . Get it off me! . . . Get it off!"

Johnny Willis stood frozen, taken by surprise as he watched Smith wrestle with eighty pounds of snarling Catahoula Cur. The big dog was hanging onto the gunman's left arm, shaking its head viciously from side to side.

Johnny snapped out of his trance, brought his shotgun up to shoot, and felt a brief thud like a sledge-hammer hitting his chest. He was flung backwards to the ground where he lay paralyzed on his back. Everything grew suddenly quieter, and his vision grew dimmer, almost tunnel like. He tried to call out to Talon, but the words wouldn't come. He felt peaceful, and then, he felt nothing more.

Talon Smith was all alone, struggling with his attacker. He managed to beat the dog off enough to draw his six-shooter, but a quick swipe from a rifle butt sent him and the pistol flying in different directions. He landed hard on his back. Stunned, he lay still, expecting death to come rushing over him like a dark wave. Instead, a man dressed in buckskin and carrying a Sharp's fifty caliber stood over him.

"Figures!" the beaten man managed to say, blood running from a head wound. "They always said you were too mean to fool around with. Guess I didn't believe it until now."

Old man Tanner studied his enemy. There was a hard glare in his eyes, a deadly twinkle that would make the spine of any man tingle with fear. "I'll give you a choice, Mister, just like I gave the other man. You move on, and I'll let you go. Come back, and I'll have your scalp dangling from my barn."

Talon Smith nodded. He wasn't a fool. Too many tales of this man made him suddenly glad to be alive. The hell with the gold. Can't spend money lying in some hole with dirt over your face, he reasoned.

"Okay, Tanner. I'll git and won't be back."

"Then get stepping sonny while there's plenty of life left in you." The old man glanced to the right quickly, noticing that his big dog had returned to his side. "Easy boy. We've got us an understanding with this man, now don't we?"

Talon rose from the ground, rubbing his arm where the dog had bitten him. His head still bled from the lick Tanner gave him, but he didn't think now would be a good time to protest. He stared hard at the dog standing next to Tanner. The big cur growled menacingly. "Damn mean dog you got, Tanner," he said. "Nearly bit my arm off!"

"Be glad, boy. Most time he goes for the throat. I just thought you fellas needed a chance, that's all. Next time, he'll take your face off."

"There won't be a next time," Smith said turning around and walking off.

The old man stood alone with the dog and the body of Johnny Willis, watching Smith go. But he knew men like Talon Smith. He knew the kind too well. It wasn't easy to walk away a beaten man. There would always be that nagging question of what would have happened if I had stayed and fought. Yes. Tanner knew that feeling. He had seen it before all too often. "Sort of takes away the spirit and the pride," he once told a friend. "Some men would rather die than walk away."

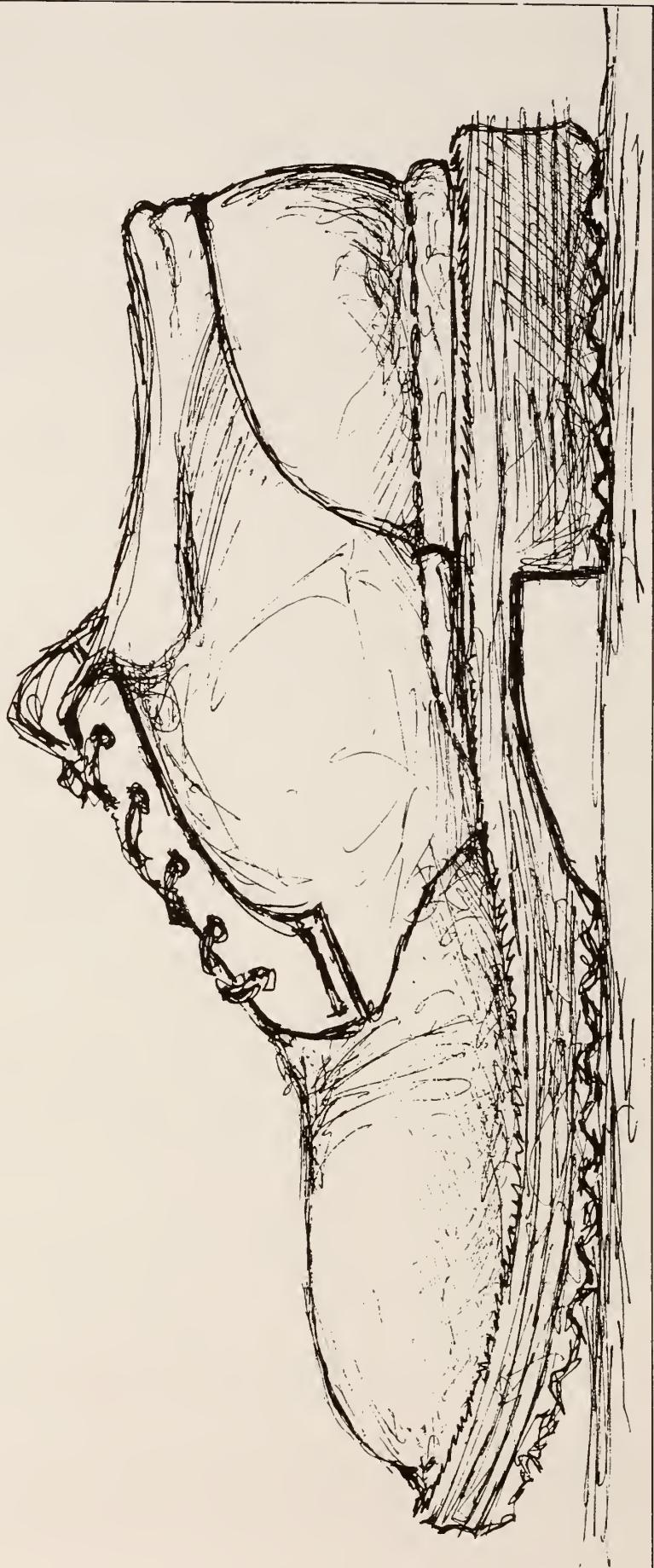
"Well, boy," old man Tanner said to the cur after ten minutes had passed. "You and me got a couple of graves to dig. Can't have the ranch smelling bad, now can we?"

The big dog growled again, staring at the direction that Talon Smith had taken through the woods. "Yea. I know boy. He's thought about it and should be getting his spare gun 'bout now. I guess you better go. Shame though. I don't feel like digging another grave."

Tanner pointed to the west. "Sic 'em."

With a burst of speed, the big cur took off, jumping over fallen limbs and slipping through the underbrush. A few minutes later, a pistol shot rang through the woods, then the sound of snarling and a man yelling, then silence. Old man Tanner shook his head as he stared down at the body of Johnny Willis. "Looks like I have three graves to dig now."

He looked skyward, seeing several black winged forms circling just above the tree tops. He nodded to the buzzards, and whispered an apology for spoiling their intentions. Wasn't right, he thought, to let a man go unburied.



6yt - Nathaniel D. Wood

A Different Kind of Ecstasy

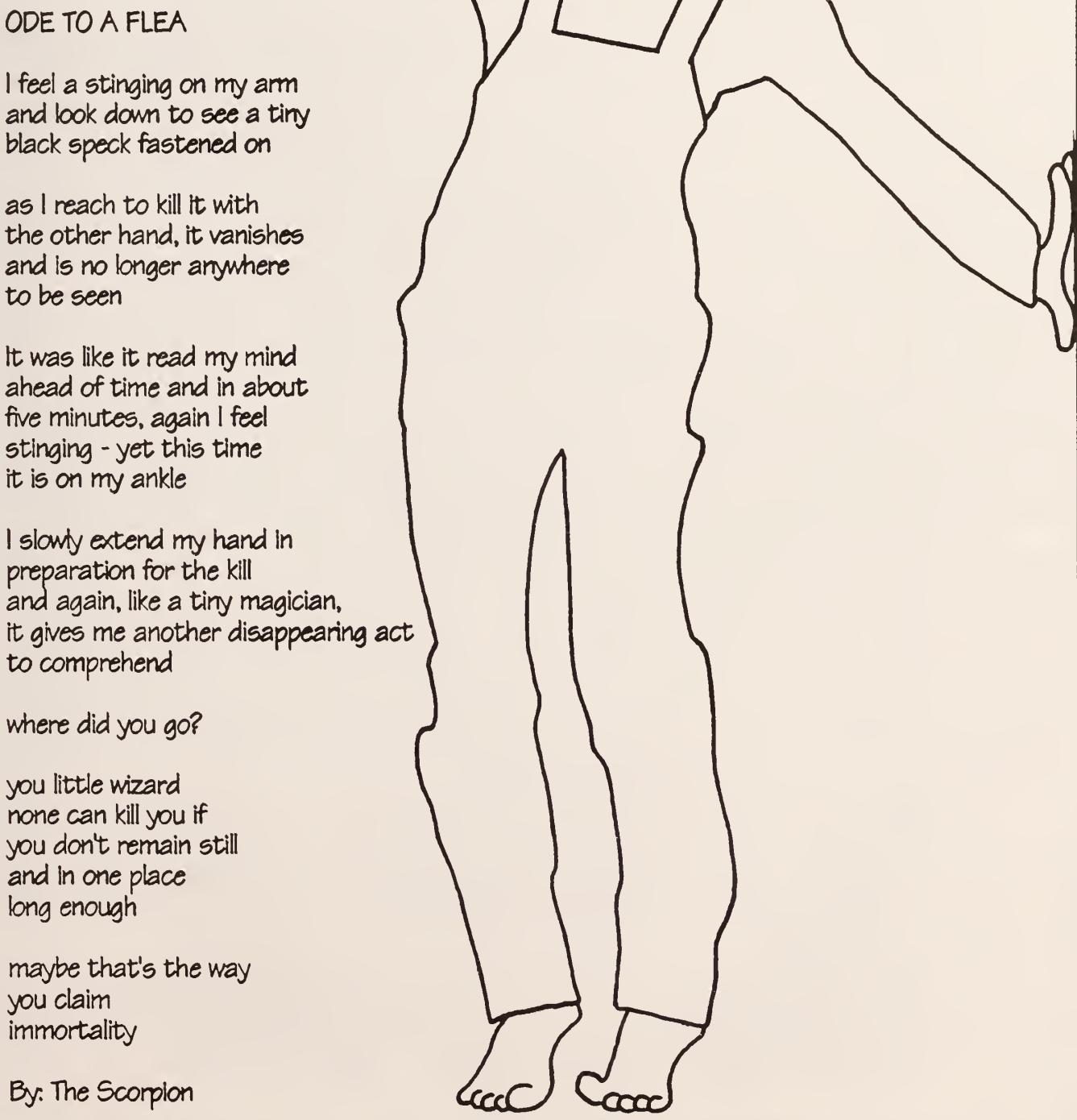
by Field Mouse

memories step softly
dancing lightly with my memories
rapture and anticipation
mix with the cold and heavy—
the heady open air
glowing in the throws of passion
repression
rapture
nervousness
depression
and a half million
emotions
blending
semi-sweet
bitter-deep
dark
and milky
chocolate coated
white-hot
fantasies
an odd tranquility
birth—life—fertility
astounding natural one
whipping-wind like
symphonies
in a strangely
blessed night
life once formed
in friendship and love
innocent sins of earth
herald a creature from heaven
a precious gift
a beating heart
my waking dreams
will carry me
to a different kind of ecstasy

JUST TALKING TO MYSELF

by The Scorpion

*I cut down a tree yesterday
in my backyard
and I asked myself
why am I doing this
since this young tree
is not dead and
has many years to live
and I answered myself
because this scrubby tree
is overshadowed by a
large and powerful oak
and this giant oak
denies the scrubby tree
the space it needs to grow
so I just sawed it down
to get it over with
better sooner than later
for it is only in the Bible
that David wins over Goliath
real life is not like that
Darwin knew that*



ODE TO A FLEA

I feel a stinging on my arm
and look down to see a tiny
black speck fastened on

as I reach to kill it with
the other hand, it vanishes
and is no longer anywhere
to be seen

It was like it read my mind
ahead of time and in about
five minutes, again I feel
stinging - yet this time
it is on my ankle

I slowly extend my hand in
preparation for the kill
and again, like a tiny magician,
it gives me another disappearing act
to comprehend

where did you go?

you little wizard
none can kill you if
you don't remain still
and in one place
long enough

maybe that's the way
you claim
immortality

By: The Scorpion

Jill GARNER '95

The South: Does it Still Exist?

by Candy Miller

In the essay “The Search for the Southern Identity,” historian C. Vann Woodward argues that the South is quickly fading into the “America Standard” of living. Nevertheless, Woodward very effectively demonstrates a compromise between Southern and American traditions, so that Southerners might keep their regional identity, yet still learn from past mistakes. He addresses the Bulldozer Revolution and racial attitudes from slavery through segregation, and suggests that Southerners in the 1960’s look at their past from a different perspective. Southerners should turn their shame of the past into knowledge, thus gaining something positive from their tragic experiences.

Woodward acknowledges that the Southerner may soon “begin to ask himself whether there is really any longer very much point in calling himself a Southerner” (17). This is the basic point of his argument. Do Southerners have anything honorable to claim as their own any more? He states that Southerners are dependent upon “old monuments of regional distinctiveness” that are “on their way toward vanishing” (16).

In particular, Woodward describes the “Bulldozer Revolution” as an “encroachment upon rural life to expand urban life” (19). The bulldozer symbolizes innovation and advancement causing rapid changes toward urbanization. The economy of the South is expanding from “rural-farm” life to metropolitan life, and Woodward attributes the decline of the Southern tradition partly to this Revolution (19). This Revolution has also caused Southerners to feel “helpless and frustrated against the mighty and imponderable agents of change” (21). Although the Bulldozer Revolution has caused a feeling of loss among Southerners, Woodward claims that the race issue brings out more serious attitudes. “Since the last World War,” he notes, “old racial attitudes that appeared more venerable and immovable than any other have exhibited a flexibility that no one would have predicted” (22). Unfortunately, Southerners are still associated with the old attitudes that support racism. “Increasingly the South is aware of its isolation in these attitudes, however,” Woodward adds, the South is also “in defense of the institutions that embody them” (22). If these attitudes continue, he concludes, it is possible that “the younger generation . . . will reject their entire regional identification” (23). Woodward’s point is clear: Southerners must realize that their traditions are in jeopardy of being lost. They can no longer live in the glorified, but imaginary past of plantations and Southern belles. They must begin to adapt to change, no longer identifying themselves with slavery and segregation for the sake of future generations.

The ““American Way of Life,” according to Woodward, is “a religion” (24). Woodward quotes sociologist Will Herberg who argues that this “religion” is “undergirding American life and overarching American society despite . . . differences of region, section, culture, and class” (24). Woodward suggests that Southerners find a balance between their heritage and the “American Way of Life.” Southerners can still be distinct, but not separate from Americans. “The collective experience of the Southern people,” according to Woodward, makes them unique. Southerners can continue their traditions while “contributing and complementing the experience of the rest of the nation” (25). America must face the reality that it is not an innocent nation, free from mistakes and defeats. The South can use its wisdom to help America become stronger. By sharing the wisdom learned from past failures, notably slavery, the South can combine its knowledge with that of other peoples to create a wiser, more mature America.

Success, for instance, has long been something closely associated with American tradition, “but the history of the South includes a long and quite un-American experience with poverty” (26). This experience of “frustration, failure, and defeat” adds to the distinctions between Southerners and other Americans (27). And, as Woodward concludes, “the experiences of evil and tragedy are parts of the Southern heritage” (28). Thus, Southerners have something crucial to offer the nation, a recognition of human limits and failures the rest of the world knows.

As the South becomes less distinctive, Woodward argues that Southerners must realize that they are no longer a separate group of Americans. They must realize that they are Americans as well as Southerners, and they should use their Southern pride and past to enrich themselves as Americans. They should incorporate the old traditions with the new in order to keep the South alive.

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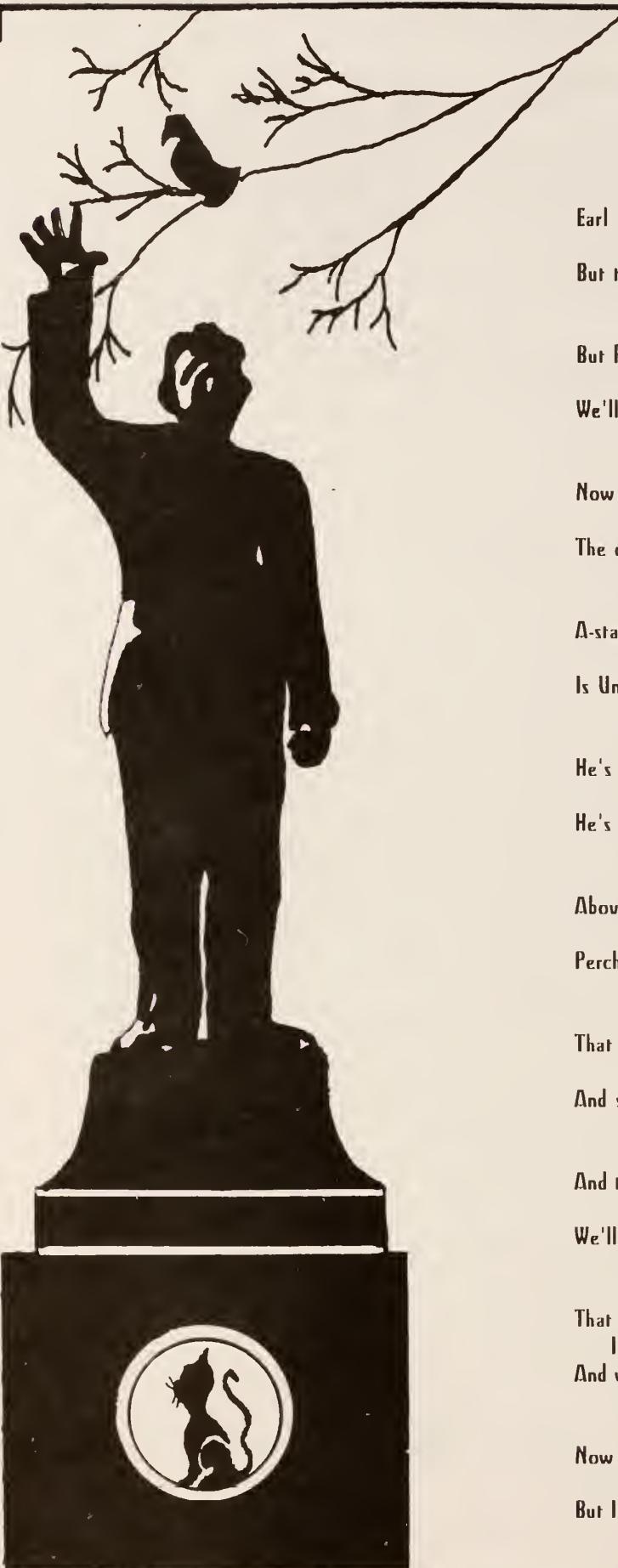
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Portrait of a Louisiana Couple

by Lux

Third Place Spring Poetry Winner

*he sits on a southern veranda
fingering parts of himself
that time has chosen
to make feeble.
she serves him
cool bourbon laced
with her memories
of his once familiar hands
touching her.
they share conversations
and gossip like their
marriage bed
with slow hope and tired faces.
they rest here under pinetrees
remembering lost passions
while expiring with their
inherited rocking chairs.*



Reincarnation
by John Doughty, Jr.

Earl K. Long and Chep Morrison
lived their lives a-feuding,
But they're both dead and I have read
it stopped all the confusion.

But folks have said when we're dead
we ain't really done;
We'll come back as something else
and fly or crawl or run.

Now I don't know if that is so,
but tell you what I seen
The other day while on my way
though Winnfield town so green.

A-standing there in Earl Long square
on the spot where he was born
Is Uncle Earl in a business suit
when suspenders he's have worn.

He's ten feet tall and made of brass
all rusty brown and green;
He's solo there in Earl Long square
except for what I seen.

Above his head up in the air
Earl's hand is like he's waving;
Perched up there like on a chair
seemed to be a raven.

That bird did blink and I did think
its beak was actually grinning
And staring straight in Earl Long's Face
as if it planned on sinning.

And then it flew and I then knew
that death is just a dawning;
We'll come back as something else
and feud and keep on wronging.

That bird took flight with all its might;
I swear it was a race.
And when it flew what I saw it do
was shit in Earl Long's Face.

Now I don't know--it could be so--
the truth in all of that,
But I'll bet down in Winnfield town
Earl Long's come back a cat.

DIXIE

by Sarah Credeur

**It's defeat
plain & simple.**

**It's red,
with a blue X,
and white stars--
and a made in
Taiwan sign.
It's courage
and bravery
and plain stubbornness.**

It's what I am.

It's what makes me, me.

**It's what separates me
from the rest of the country.**

I never flew it,

Never knew a boy who fought for it--

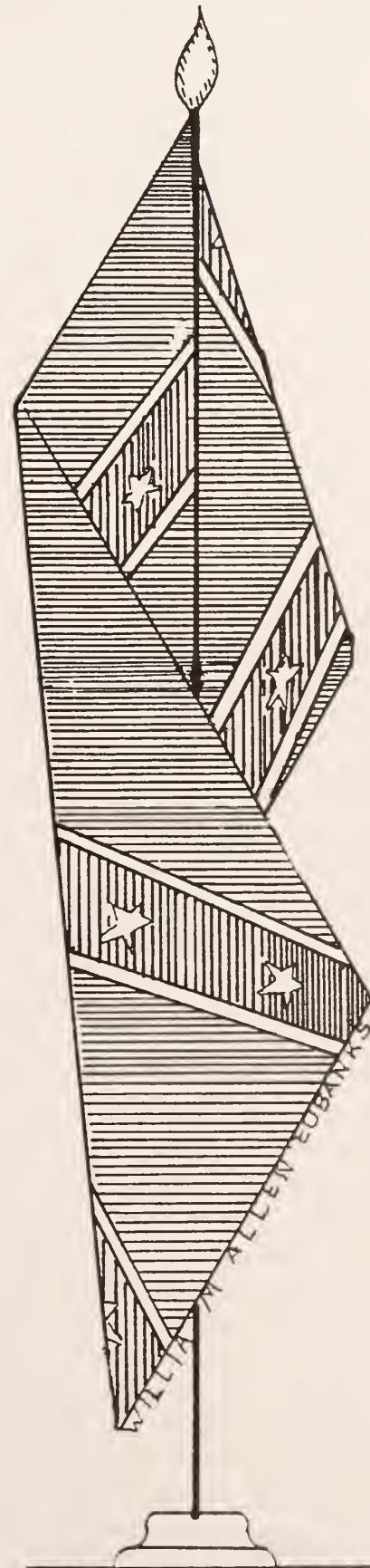
**yet it is the thing
that has shaped my life.**

**I can not run
away from it.**

**I can not forget
either it or
what it symbolizes.**

I wear it as a do-rag

**Proudly yet sadly
with a trace of regret.**



Harlem II; for Langston

by Chiquita

Cotton Candy dreams—
Taste sticky sweet on my tongue
Then melt away.

Lost Lamb

by Mark Burt
Third Place Fall Nonfiction Winner

Langston Hughes effectively illustrates in his essay, “Salvation,” that organized religion distorts and adulterates the very values it claims to teach. Hughes makes his point by using various rhetorical devices such as narrative language, emotional appeal, and irony. In “Salvation,” young Hughes’ aunt brings him to a revival where he is pressured into lying about “seeing Jesus” just to go along with the congregation. “Good” church members, who claim to be teaching values such as honesty, force him to lie. Hughes’ innate innocence, goodness, and honesty cause him to feel guilt instead of relief from guilt in his “salvation.” This distortion of religion causes Young Langston to lose God instead of find Him.

Hughes effectively makes use of narrative language by letting the reader live the experience through visual, auditory, and tactile descriptions. For example, the reader actually *sees* “old women with the black faces and braided hair, old men with work-gnarled hands” (98); visualizes Westley “sitting proudly on the platform, swinging his knickerbockered legs and grinning down” (99); *hears* the preacher’s “wonderful rhythmic sermon, all moans and shouts and lonely cries and dire pictures of hell” (98). Later, the reader experiences an auditory “vision” of “prayers and songs swirled all around . . . and mighty wail of moans and voices” (99). Through Hughes’ use of strong narrative language, the reader is transformed from observer to participant as he feels the heat and vibrations of the “hot, crowded church . . . [and] the whole building rocked with prayers and song” (98).

The author uses narrative language to set a mood and put the reader in the environment. The reader experiences what Hughes experiences, and feels the intensity of the moment through Hughes’ senses. By using narrative language, Hughes allows the reader to see the world through the young boy’s eyes, thus gaining the reader’s empathy. Instead of telling the reader what happens, Hughes shows him. This makes the reader more receptive to the final dilemma: the disparity between values taught and values actualized.

Hughes not only provides the reader with a visual, auditory, and tactile “vision” of the experience, he also appeals to our emotions. Emotional appeal strengthens the reader’s sympathy for Hughes’ dilemma. Hughes also effectively make use of humor to communicate his point. The reader laughs out loud when Westley finally gives in to peer pressure and fatigue when he says, “God damn! I’m tired ‘o sitting here. Let’s get up and be saved” (99). However, Langston feels intensely guilty mostly because he lied: “I couldn’t bear to tell her hat I had lied. That I had deceived everyone in the church” (99). Hughes further

appeals to our sense of disappointment, abandonment, and betrayal when he writes, “I cried. I cried in my bed alone and couldn’t stop. I buried my head in the quilts . . . I hadn’t seen Jesus and . . . now I didn’t believe there was a Jesus anymore, since he didn’t come and help me” (99). When the reader experiences the humor and feels the shame, abandonment, and betrayal of Hughes, he sees the conflict between what the saving experience should have been and what it actually was. The boy is supposed to be “revived”—instead part of him dies.

The most powerful rhetorical device Hughes uses to communicate the concept of distorted religion is irony. The author writes, with dripping sarcasm, that “some very hardened sinners has been brought to Christ, and the membership of the church had grown by leaps and bounds” (98). This leads the reader to wonder if the church is really concerned about saving sinners—who were probably not all that evil anyway—or with increasing membership, and thus increasing the coffers.

Additionally, the author uses irony when, on two separate occasions, he makes reference to the “mourner’s bench” (98,99). Langston is supposed to be experiencing a life giving event, while he is yet seated on the bench of death. Another example of irony is the foreshadowing of “salvation” of the “one lost lamb:” “Then [the preacher] sang a song about the . . . one little lamb was left out in the cold” (98). When all the other “lambs” have been “saved,” even the blasphemous Westley, Langston is “left all alone on the mourner’s bench” (99). A great self fulfilling prophecy takes place when Langston, “the lone little lamb,” is finally brought into the fold, which sends the congregation into a frenzy: “waves of rejoicing swept the place” (99).

The ultimate irony, however, is that while salvation is supposed to leave Langston feeling cleansed and relieved of guilt and shame, his experience at the temple induces an overwhelming sense of guilt. Instead of being “revived,” a part of Langston dies—the part of him who believes in Jesus: “now I didn’t believe there was a Jesus any more” (99). Instead of gaining Jesus, Langston loses him. All this happens because of the distorted interpretation the membership of the church makes of the word of God. Hughes uses the technique of irony to show us the contrast between what salvation should be and the reality of the “lost lamb.”

In conclusion, Langston Hughes demonstrates that organized religion distorts and adulterates the true message of God by causing a young boy to lose faith in God instead of gaining it. Hughes effectively illustrates this point by the use of rhetorical devices such as narrative language, emotional appeal, and irony. Like the people in the “Emperor’s New Clothes,” peer pressure forces Langston, the other young people “saved” that night, and probably the whole congregation to lie about experiences of salvation. They are forced to lie about an experience which must happen freely, not on demand. They are pressured into feigning an experience, thus shattering the values of honesty and truth which the church asserts to embody.

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Poem 13

by Angelica Kraushaar

Gossamer threads like disconnected spiderwebs
floating across empty space
Clouds and strands—holes open
and close in the wind
Once a snake stuck his head out
and whispered to me—
Cold hands and breath like steam
frozen on the wind
Chose that moment to remind me—
this place couldn't be real
Safety built on shattered ice foundations
And the wind picked up
Spread the filaments from in front of me
And built another web to trap my breath



Fallen Demon - John Shamburger

Dramatic Situation

by Julie Tisdale

I was sitting in the gym one day talking to some friends and sneaking occasional glances into the cafeteria. I was hoping to get a glimpse of Kyle, my newest crush.

Suddenly, a huge crowd started flowing into the cafeteria from all sides. I wondered what the hell was going on when, to my great delight, Kyle came running in. He came up to my group and exclaimed, "Guys, you'll never guess what just happened. This girl stabbed this other girl with a big butcher knife. It's wild in there."

The people around me got excited, and started asking questions.

"Is there a lot of blood?"

"Can you see any guts?"

"Can we go see?" Then everyone made a dash for the cafeteria.

I sat down, a little sick, and tried to block out all the blood-thirsty people around me. Kyle came up and grabbed my hand. "Let's go see, come on!" I tried to say no, but I couldn't make my lips move. The one time Kyle was paying any attention to me had to be something like this. Kyle pulled me up and into the cafeteria. The place was jam-packed. Students were trying to push and shove their way into the center of the crowd while the teachers tried to clear them out. Kyle somehow worked his way through the mob with me in tow until we were close to the front.

There was the girl. I didn't know her personally, but I had seen her around school. She had been in a club with me. She was lying on her side kind of panting. Every few moments her body would twitch, and she would let out this awful animal sound. There was blood everywhere. It soaked her jacket and shirt. It was almost black in the middle of her back, and spread into a bright red color over the floor and wall behind her.

I closed my eyes, but it was too late. The image burned into my mind all too vividly. I don't know how long I stood there like that, but when I opened my eyes she wasn't twitching anymore.

I don't remember sirens or lights, but I remember the paramedics who came rushing in with their gurney to take her away. She was so still and silent when they hoisted her up. No one had to tell me she was dead.

Everyone around me started talking and joking around. The braver ones dipped their pens in the blood that covered everything and wrote on the walls. I felt nauseous. The teachers finally threatened suspension to anyone who didn't clear out. Kyle (and everyone else) split when they heard that.

I turned and slowly made my way out. I passed a group of people who were still calmly eating their lunches and joking around—as if nothing had happened.

I headed for the bathroom as soon as I reached the gym; I barely made it to the sink to vomit. I retched until stomach acid came up. The bell rang for the next class. I washed my face, put on a smile, and left.

**Life is cruel,
life is unfair.
It gives you body fat,
and takes away your hair.**

by Frank Lewis

MIDE BETTA
ART '95

Evil

by Bryan Doke

How easily that word rolls off your tongue.
What a minuscule comprehension of pain you have.
To burn in eternity is the wish of a limited imagination.
It grows.
Seeping inward to the depths of your soul.
Confined in darkness,
Your body contorts and shifts,
Overcome by a slow rage.
Evil can be very patient.
It is not big.
It is not small.
It slowly stacks upon itself, little by little, until you are empty within.
I understand evil. I have been stacking.

Neck Romance

by Orenthia Davell Dillard

*Inter-racial love hath no fury
Like a white man scorned
Whose soul judges the injuries
Of the woman he has sworn
To protect
Against such black collar crime
Rope to neck
In essence the neck is mine*



"Homely Examples" in "The American Scholar," Walden, and Pragmatism

*by Nathan Wood
Third Place Spring Nonfiction Winner*

In Democracy in America Alexis de Tocqueville compares the arts and sciences of democracies and aristocracies. He notices that the literature of democracies such as the United States—where ranks are intermingled and educational backgrounds of authors and readers alike vary greatly—is more common than the codified literature of aristocracies. Tocqueville also asserts that the philosophical method of Americans “tend[s] to results without being bound to means . . . to strike through the form to the substance.”¹ Throughout, he stresses the American affinity for personal investigation, immediacy, universality, and, especially, for practicality. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “The American Scholar,” Henry David Thoreau’s Walden, and William James’ Pragmatism clearly manifest some of Tocqueville’s observations. Indeed, a particular example of the prose of all three, the “homely example,” illustrates an American approach to the art of understanding.² Homely examples use common experiences to teach great truths. In Pragmatism, James’ clever use of everyday examples helps in two main ways: abstract ideas are made clear in a “real-life,” practical way; and second, these examples or impressions are powerful and memorable—they are more likely to stick with us than abstractions. Emerson and Thoreau, though not as prominently as James, also use unpretentious, concrete, vivid examples to make their points. More importantly, for all three writers homely examples are more than a stylistic feature; they are part of the point. For these three Americans, it is not the abstract and abstruse (which Tocqueville identifies with the aristocracy) but the common and practical (qualities Tocqueville assigns to democracies) which matter most. Ordinary life, when thoughtfully lived, is a far greater teacher than the bookish life of the sedentary scholar.

In thinking about homely examples as a part of the method of these three men, we ought to remember the context in which their words originally appeared. “The American Scholar” was a lecture. Emerson delivered the speech to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, Mass. in August, 1837. Walden (1854) was never delivered as a lecture,³ but its intent is similar: to edify and instruct. Thoreau writes for everyone, especially those who live in Concord, but his allusions to Greek mythology and “hindoo” philosophy betray his Harvard education. If his audience follows him, they, too, must be well-educated. And James’ book, Pragmatism, is a compilation of eight lectures delivered on the subject at the Lowell Institute in Boston and then at Columbia University during the winter of 1906-1907. Like Emerson, James addressed an interested and well-educated audience. Lively examples are helpful in a lecture format: they can clarify abstract ideas, and they are memorable. Emerson, Thoreau, and James are obviously aware of the value of examples, but their decision to use homely examples with an educated audience goes beyond reasons of clarification. These writers and speakers use homely examples because they believe that we find the greatest truths in common, practical ways.

Emerson’s address is rich with vivid imagery and memorable metaphors, a few of which I think qualify as homely examples. The central image of the essay is the fable of “Man divided into men” (84). Emerson reminds his audience of the fable of One Man, created whole by the gods, but divided into men that he might better help himself. The problem is, however, that we divided men forget that we are parts of that whole Man. Without this awareness, amputated from the trunk, “we strut about so many walking monsters,—a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man” (84). The planter forgets the dignity of his calling and “sees his bushel and cart, and nothing beyond” (85). He becomes a mere farmer, “instead of Man on the farm” (85). Similarly, “the priest becomes a form; the attorney a statute-book; the mechanic a machine; the sailor a rope of the ship” (85). Emerson uses these examples in developing what he expects the American Scholar to be: “Man Thinking,” and not a “mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men’s thinking” (85). Emerson desires for his listeners to be more than severed elbows and fingers, more than statute-books and ropes; his examples help us see how men have fallen short of recognizing their own value—to themselves and to society (*The One Man*). His concept of the scholar as Man Thinking, elucidated throughout the oration, relies on this first series of examples.

In his address, Emerson discusses what are, according to him, the three main educational influences for the American Scholar: Nature, the Past (as known through books), and Action. At the beginning of his section on Action, Emerson says, “There goes in the world a notion that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian,—as unfit for any handiwork as a penknife for an axe” (91). Emerson of course disagrees with that notion. “Action is

with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth" (91). The scholar should be more than a penknife; indeed, it is through action that his thoughts "ripen into truths."

Emerson's advice in his section on Action differs little from his advice in the previous two sections. The scholar, or Man Thinking, is not, according to Emerson, a feeble bookworm. To the contrary, the scholar should be out in Nature learning his intricate relationship to the whole of it. He should use books to supplement his education, remembering all the while that they are filtered versions of the truth. And he should recognize that there "is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade, for learned and unlearned hands" (95). A beautiful example, also from the section on Action, illustrates Emerson's attitude to learning and sources of knowledge:

Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made. (94)

For Emerson, the education of the scholar is not limited to lectures at the university; indeed, those lectures matter little in relation to his other opportunities to learn. Emerson believes in the **idea** of the homely example, not so much as a rhetorical method, but as a method of living. He believes that homely experiences can teach us profound truths. Man Thinking, as we have seen, learns grammar in the pits at the quarry.

Thoreau, like Emerson, connects lofty abstractions to "real flesh-and-blood life."⁴ Also like Emerson, Thoreau uses the penknife, a very American, personal tool, in an example. In "Economy" he makes an argument for self-education by asking his reader to consider two boys with pocketknives. One has made a jackknife for himself from ore he dug and smelted, having read as much as necessary for the task, while another boy attended lectures on metallurgy and got a penknife from his father. "Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month?" he asks. "Which would be most likely to cut his fingers?" (Thoreau 95).

Thoreau uses lowly insects to make large observations of human life. To an insect on the forest floor, Thoreau wishes to impart some "cheering information," but he knows that the crawly creature is only trying to hide from him. He says, "I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect" (380). Another insect example is that of the battle of the ants (275-279). Thoreau one day observed on his wood-pile a huge battle between large black ants and little red ants. He tells his reader that this was the only battle he had ever witnessed: "the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other" (276). He watches the brave combatants, "excited somewhat even as if they had been men." In fact, he says, the "more you think of it, the less the difference" (277). He compares the battle to the one of his town's namesake, remarking that it cannot compare in terms of bravery, loyalty, or loss of life. He says that he has "no doubt that it was a principle [the ants] fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea" (377).

That we are similar to ants in our wars and principles could not have a more forcible argument than this. Thoreau's observation of lowly ants helps us understand our attitude toward war. Unpretentious and real, this example like the others is memorable and meaningful.

A favorite homely example in Pragmatism is of the cowpath (James, Lecture Six, 89-90). In this example, James supposes that, lost and starved in the woods, he comes upon a cowpath. It "is of the utmost importance," he says, "that I should think of a human habitation at the end of it, for if I do so and follow it, I save myself" (90). He tells us that the "true thought" of a cowpath leading to a house is useful here only because the object of that thought (the house) is useful at such a time. This example shows that truths have variable practicality, that they are instruments to action (89), and that we cannot always rely on verification of an idea before pursuing it. The discovery of the house would be verification of that truth, but a belief that a cowpath leads to a human habitation must precede that verification process.

Similarly, James uses an example of a clock to demonstrate, despite a popular view that insists otherwise, that a true idea does not necessarily copy its reality. James encourages his listeners to close their eyes and imagine the clock on the wall (88). In imagining the clock, unless we are clockmakers, we cannot—or do not—imagine the workings of the clock, we only imagine it as it appears to us, or as we can remember it. Our sensible idea of the clock may be true, but our idea of its "works" is not accurate. Our ideas cannot accurately copy reality, but we may nevertheless rely on them as truths. What we accept as truths must finally be beliefs that **work**. We all accept that "yonder clock" is a clock "altho no one of us has seen the hidden works that make it one" (91).

Again and again James explains abstractions through such concrete, everyday examples: the squirrel and the man circling the tree (22-23), which shows how pragmatism works to solve seemingly impossible questions; the mud and rich thickets (33,43,54,101) to show the real world as opposed to the "skinny outline" (33) of the world accepted by rationalists; the snowball's growth (99), which shows how truths and facts compound each other; or the dog and cat (131-132) that demonstrate, in their relation to human beings, our own relation to "the highest form of

existence" (131). In these cases, a commonplace example from real-life helps the reader to imagine the concept in action. An image of a burgeoning snowball to represent the relation of truths and facts is humorous and not easily forgotten. Nor are the dog and cat, longtime favorite examples for philosophers, as representatives of our ignorance of the highest form of existence easily forgotten. To talk of god and a dog, or truth and a cowpath may seem blasphemous to the "tender-hearted" (see next page), but it is certainly not pretentious—it's only practical.

What is pragmatism without simple, verifying, real-life results? According to James, the pragmatic method is the "attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts" (27).⁵ Pragmatism calls for facts and then asks: given these facts, what is the most practical truth? It must consider "life's rich thicket"; it is at home in the "mud"; abstractions and concepts mean little without practical value. It tackles the largest and most difficult of ideas (theism/idealism vs. materialism, free-will vs. determinism, rationalism vs. empiricism), but it relies on homely examples to interpret them. Finally, the truths we discover, or the truths we choose to believe, must agree with our other beliefs, and they ought to envision a world of hope, a world of promise (55).

Consider Thoreau's pocketknife example: Which boy has learned the most? Which boy will likely cut himself? According to Thoreau, the boy who has learned for himself has the advantage. Why, finally, did Thoreau go to Walden?

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life . . . and reduce it to its lowest terms. (135)

Thoreau went to Walden because he wanted to learn all that life had to teach him, and he writes about his experiences as a "Chanticleer" to wake us up (45). In his "Conclusion," as throughout the book, Thoreau encourages us to learn from his example—and to discover "continents" of our own (369). Thoreau shows us that hoeing beans can teach us much more about the value of time, seeds, or money than any book or sermon.

Indeed, Thoreau's experience at Walden is itself the ultimate homely example of what Emerson proposes in his speech, "The American Scholar." Thoreau, as Man Thinking, studies Nature, and grows to know himself (see Emerson, 86-87; and in *Walden*: "The Ponds," "Brute Neighbors," "Winter Animals," and "Spring"). He savors books and reading, but still thinks independently: he is not "warped clean out of his own orbit [by a book], and made a satellite instead of a system" (Emerson, 88; see Thoreau's chapter entitled "Reading"). Thoreau expounds on the greatness of books and reading, but tells us that his copy of Homer's *Iliad* lay virtually untouched on his table throughout the summer because of "incessant labor with his hands" (145). Building his house or hoeing beans, he learns the value of Action as well, and is thus a "Whole Man."

Finally, the idea of "homely examples" as unpretentious, memorable, true-to-life examples is helpful in understanding "The American Scholar," *Walden*, and Pragmatism. All three texts use such examples and in fact encourage a view of the world that invites such examples. Homely examples are more than a literary or rhetorical technique. The whole idea of a homely example is crucially linked to the main idea of these texts. If we have trouble with homely examples, we really have trouble with the central arguments of Emerson, Thoreau, and James: which are that we must discover the truth practically for ourselves, thus making life better for ourselves. Thoreau's two-year experiment on the shore of Walden Pond is such a case. Thoreau does not want us merely to play or study life, but earnestly live it (94). He hopes we will glean the greater point from his own experience in the thicket.

¹ Tocqueville, Alexis. Democracy in America, abridged by Thomas Bender. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., p.295.

² Dr. Grady Ballenger coined the term "homely example" in reference to William James' down-to-earth, witty style of explaining philosophical ideas.

³ Thoreau was a lecturer, though. One of his most popular essays, "Civil Disobedience," was originally delivered in a local assembly as "The Relation of the Individual to the State" in 1848.

⁴ Grady Ballenger.

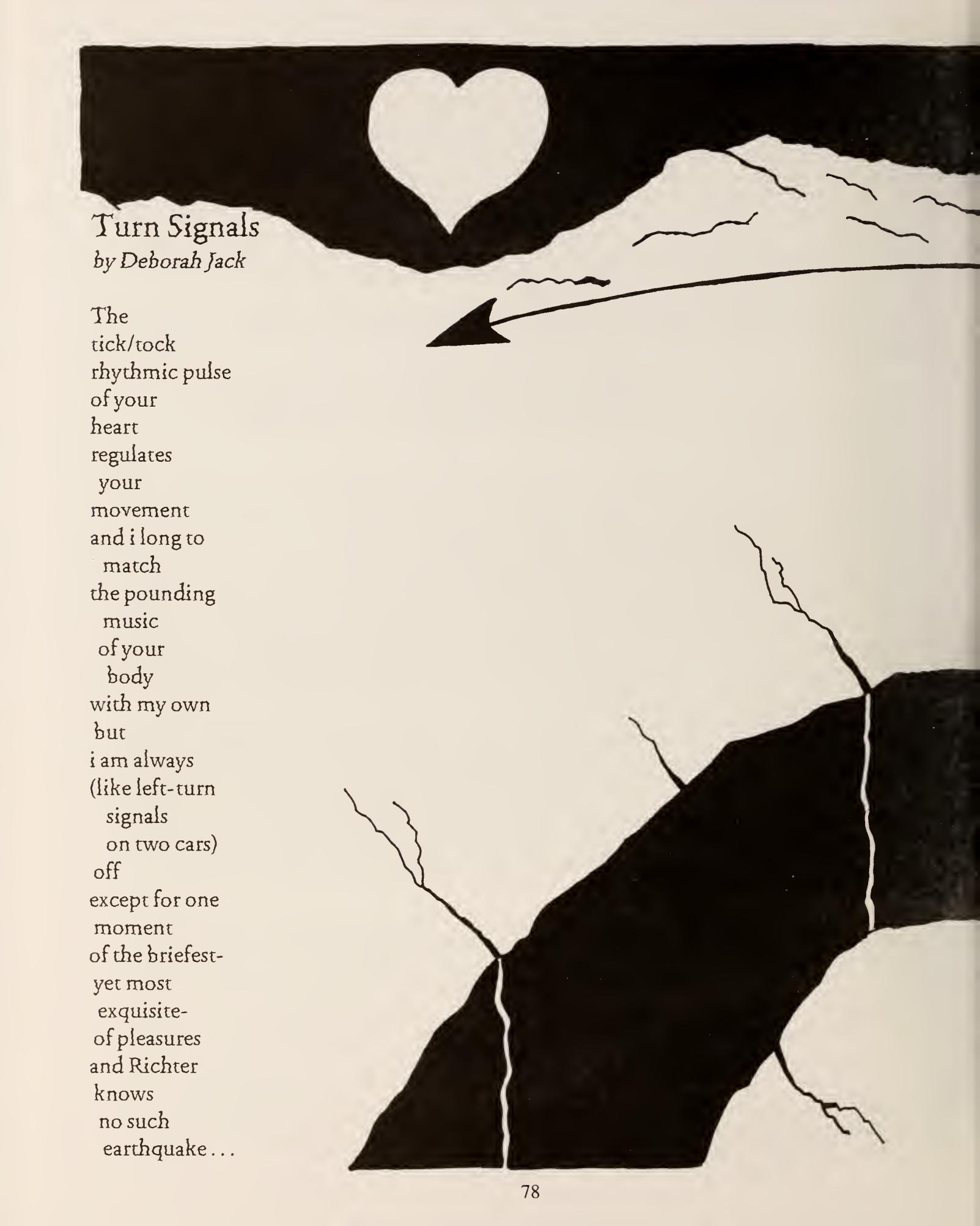
⁵ This is precisely what Tocqueville said of the American attitude to philosophy more than seventy years before.

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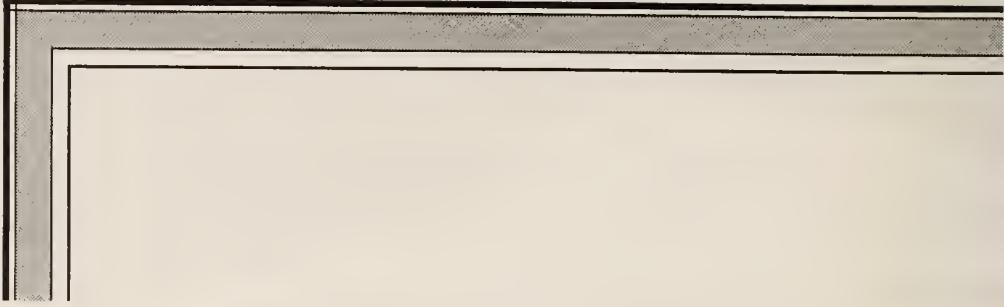


Turn Signals

by Deborah Jack

The
tick/tock
rhythmic pulse
of your
heart
regulates
your
movement
and i long to
match
the pounding
music
of your
body
with my own
but
i am always
(like left-turn
signals
on two cars)
off
except for one
moment
of the briefest-
yet most
exquisite-
of pleasures
and Richter
knows
no such
earthquake...





What good is the necklace?

by Matt Watson

WHAT GOOD IS THE NECKLACE?
SMALL CHAINS THAT CREATE A GOLDEN LATTICE.
ITS BEAUTY CAPTURES THE SIMPLETON'S GAZE,
THE LACK OF MEANING HIDDEN BY A SHINY GLAZE.

IT WOULD BE A SENILE MISTAKE,
FOR GOLD, THE WEAKEST CHAIN, WOULD BREAK
WHEN A STUDENT ATTEMPTS TO STRANGLE A TEACHER
WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE LOVELY WORKS OF HIS MASTER.

ON MANY WALLS ARE HUNG
THE MOST HIGHLY POLISHED PIECES OF DUNG,
DECORATIONS HEAPED ON OFTEN TO HIDE
THAT NOTHING OF MEANING EXISTS INSIDE.



THE WHORE OF BABYLON

BY LE KREAUX

Look at what they've done to Lady Liberty:
she rides this malevolent,
yet ephemeral
beast
like an orgasm does
a sweaty mattress on a hot summer night.
This woman is lost somewhere
in the deceptive paradise
of today's martyrs.

The sun boils in her veins
and the weight of silence plagues
her schizophrenic thoughts.

Disaster is the color of her mesmeric eyes.
Mendacious reasons burn in one hand,
which is why the sky
seems bluer here.

In the other,
she holds the history of the Great Revolt.
The only emotion her heart ever expressed is fear.
watch us melt into the mattress

US

by Julie Tisdale

we stand on the streetcorner
looking at each other
as if we were important
because we have nothing better to do

buildings shoot up around us
the street rolls on and on
blending into the sun-
falling fast

you look at me

droves of people scuttle
for protection against the night
(poor ignorants- night is so gentle)

we sit on the streetcorner
you not knowing me at all

Familiar Strangers

by Field Mouse

Lovely One
Acts of kindness
under a hard, glowing flesh
Closing off
in a feeling of intensity
and hurt and pain and pleasure
a collage of blood
tears
and sweet carnal liquids
feelings of friendship
in the dominions of my mind
wanting pleasure
complete rapture
a loss of control
scratching, clawing
uncovers pain
in the midst of sensuality
look for others
seeing the past
rapt in a notion
in thoughts
in a history of running
I try to stop
feigning rest
on a bed of my own making
I lay in the tatters, the shards, and the rust
of a never-ending promise of the past
look to the future
others I see
look to them—look through them
in passions i seek
Never to close my heart
in the arms of familiar strangers
but I am looking for you in the faces
in the crowds—I want you to see me
but I am not there
You look through me to others
stop and you stare
finding comfort
in the embrace of familiar strangers

APOSTASY

(excerpt)

*by Terry Pleasant
Second Place Spring Fiction Winner*

The man and woman were lovers, but less than friends. Their attraction to one another centered only on the physical and ignored such emotions as love. What motivated them was the passion of power, and both believed that they possessed what many only dream of. Their lives consisted of fragments of time in which yesterday and tomorrow related only to shadowy memories and obscure dreams. Selfishly, they lived for the sensation of the moment, bathing in the pleasures of their perverted desires. Blindly, one believed in the illusion of a partnership, while the other used and sucked the essence of life like a vampire drawing blood from a fresh kill. In truth, only one understood that partnerships are merely agreements bonded by paper or words. And as reality has so often proven, the rude awakening lies in the fact that agreements can sometimes be wrapped in fallacy, and quickly dissolved.

They lay quietly sleeping on the bed, the faint whisper of their breathing muffled by the humming of an air conditioner struggling to maintain the temperature at seventy-five degrees within the paneled walls of the motel room. Their bodies reeked of alcohol and sweat, and the minuscule aroma of sex lingered in their nostrils. On a night stand next to the bed, smoke ascended in lazy spirals from a cigarette left burning in an ashtray. Near the window, a bottle stood half empty on a table, the staunch smell of Jack Daniels strong in the confines of the room. Beside it, the gold shield of a detective lay where its owner had placed it.

At three a.m., the woman stirred, and a head covered with short, blonde hair rose up and peered for several minutes at the man lying near her. She turned away after awhile and quietly got out of bed. Barefoot, she moved across the floor with easy steps toward the bathroom. She searched the wall for the switch, found it, and flipped it on. In the dim glare of a night light, she proceeded to dress, slipping into a pair of black stockings that came up two inches above her knees. Then she put on a short, slinky black dress that slithered down past her hips. Holding on to the sink with her left hand for balance, she put on a pair of black high heels that had been lying on the edge of the bath tub. Dressed, she turned on the faucet over the sink just enough to allow a steady stream of water to dampen a wash cloth. Careful to avoid making any unnecessary noise, she washed her face, but ignored brushing her teeth. That could wait. Then quietly, she dug in her purse and retrieved a black-handled, nine-millimeter automatic pistol.

She held the weapon with her right hand and ran the slender fingers of her left hand along the length of the long cylinder protruding from the barrel, and smiled. She loved the feel of the silencer, loved the way it quelled the noise of the round when she fired it. It was exhilarating. Countless times she had looked down its sights, pulled the trigger and bathed in the results: the blood splattering, the death throes, the last moments of breath a person takes before his eyes close for eternity. She enjoyed the power that swept through her every time she killed. It thrilled her, gave her a high she couldn't obtain from any other aspect of her life. Death was a drug, and she was the addict.

She measured her confidence in the cold stare of her eyes reflecting in the mirror. Her smile widened as she peered at herself, viewing the benevolence of her soul in that pitiful glare.

It was the reflection of madness.

Her business finished in the bathroom, she stepped back in the room where the man continued to sleep. She stopped at the foot of the bed and stared down at him, tilting her head sideways slightly, as if she were studying him, trying to decipher the attributes that she had found so intriguing about him. What had it been? His good looks? His love making? No! It was neither. What it was, she really couldn't remember, nor did she care. Like a useless commodity that needed to be discarded after being soiled, he had served his purpose and had become old news. His worth had deteriorated over time, and she wondered to herself if there had ever been any need for him anyway.

The automatic dangled loosely from her right hand, the cold metal felt exhilarating against the bare flesh of her thigh where the stockings and her dress parted. She rubbed the weapon softly up and down her leg, the stroking was pleasing, almost sensual. For a brief moment, she lost herself in the private embrace of perverted passion. But the man stirred....

Without another thought, she took a two-handed stance and fired four rounds into the back of his

head. The automatic kicked, but the sounds of the firing were little more than soft thuds in the room. The casings ejected and fell to the carpet quietly. She would pick them up afterwards. It had become a mental habit with her. Repetition had molded her trade into an art of professionalism. Mistakes were not allowed if one wished to survive the business of death.

With blood oozing from the back of his head, the man lay as he died, arms out to the side, head down face first in the pillow. A dark smear began to form in the sheets as blood gushed from his head in a continuous stream of arterial spray, spreading quickly across the bed and soaking the mattress with dark, red liquid.

After a few minutes had passed, the blonde stuck the gun in her purse and laid it down on the table by the window. She ignored the grisly scene and proceeded to wipe every place in the room that she might have touched with a handkerchief. Then, putting the handkerchief away, she walked over to the small closet space near the bathroom where she had stored a wig with long, black hair. She put the wig on, altering her appearance with the waist-length strands.

With a quick check of the room for anything she might be leaving behind, she walked over to the door, reached down to the knob and gripped it with the handkerchief that she had taken from her purse again, and opened the door slowly. Carefully, she peeped out to see if anyone was in the parking lot.

It was empty.

She glanced back momentarily at the body, staring at it indifferently as if it had never been alive to start with. It meant no more to her than the white crap snorted up her nose. It was just another high.

She turned and stepped out of the room, closed the door gently behind her so as not to make any noise, then disappeared into the early morning darkness. A half hour later and eight miles away from the motel, she dialed a number on her car phone. She waited patiently until finally a man's voice answered.

"Hello?"

"It is done!"

"Good! You have done well!"

"That liability will not trouble us again."

"I understand."

"What do you wish of me now?"

"Wait . . . I will be in touch!"

Click!

Dreams. . . . Everyone has them. Some are familiar, some not. Some make you smile in your sleep, while others carve your consciousness into little slices and store them in secret chambers of the mind for later digestion to feed complexes of guilt and fear. These were the "bad dreams," the ones that tormented and brought misery to your life.

Bad dreams were like diseases, always lurking around and striking at the underbelly. Cowards. . . . That was what bad dreams were. They never intruded upon the soul during hours of awareness. Instead, they harbored like shadows in the night, venturing up from the iniquitous pools of the mind during a person's most vulnerable period. They waited like vultures until you were lying on your back, open to attack, and then they rushed in like wild dogs for the kill.

Spencer could tell you about bad dreams. He had them all the time. They came last night, and the night before. And tonight, the bad dreams had come again. This time as a jungle with a maze of twisted vines, rotted vegetation, and a million crawling things that could bite through flesh.

He could see frightening lairs in the dream, teeming with hidden predators, thirsty for the taste of blood and the excitement of the kill; some that walked on four legs, others that slithered on scaly stomachs and killed with deadly coils and dripping fangs. He was there among them, staring up at winged shadows with razor talons perched high above the forest floor, searching for any movement that would betray a potential victim. A thunderous cacophony of noise assaulted his ears as creatures of the jungle chirped, squealed, hissed, and screamed in their foreign tongues. In the canopy above him, dim golden beams of light filtered through thick foliage like water seeping through cracks in a rock.

On the jungle floor where he stepped, everything was enveloped in a tomb of darkness. Water slithered off huge plant leaves in tiny rivers, only to be immediately swallowed up by another form of vegetation struggling for survival beneath. Hot, murky, wet, with a putrid stench of organic decay that

lingered like a choking fog. To him, the jungle was the very pits of hell.

He was searching again in his dream, looking for the girl, the eight-inch Gerber sharp and ready. He could feel the metal blade in his hand. It was light, a weapon for an assassin.

Sweat stung his eyes, but he ignored it. He was on the trail of "Charlie," the enemy who was like a chameleon, appearing in various masks. At times, Charlie came at you looking like a farmer, a school teacher, a monk, other times as a child offering a bottle of coke filled with broken glass. He was an elusive enemy, hard to find, and even harder to kill. This evening, in the gloom and stench of the jungle, Charlie was a seventeen-year-old girl, and Spencer had been assigned to kill her.

He saw himself once again, not understanding why everything seemed so dim, so distant, and yet so close. He fought for awareness, gritting his teeth as he struggled to continue his mission. Morality had vanished, replaced by barbaric reasoning. It was war, and war required no conscience, only the steady thrust of a razor-sharp blade into the soft flesh of the stinking Cong.

Like a slow-motion camera taking him through each step of the kill, he saw himself running after the girl, catching her, listening to her pleas for mercy as she tried to persuade him that she wasn't VC. But her words were useless. She had been condemned by the Intelligence unit that ruled Spencer's life, made him what he was, gave him a purpose in which to exist. There was nothing to do but complete the mission. That was what drove him: the mission. He would obey. He must. It was his duty to kill and destroy the enemy.

Mindlessly, he plunged the knife into the girl's abdomen, watching her gasp her last breath as she faded from one world to the unknown realms of another.

He stood over her, triumphant, his mission completed. He wanted to feel good about succeeding, but he didn't. Why not? Why, he thought, couldn't he rejoice in completing his mission. There should have been more positive feelings running through his soul, but there was only a loneliness that he couldn't explain. It overshadowed everything, made him sick to his stomach, made him want to throw his knife away.

What was the feeling? . . . Remorse? No! . . . It couldn't be. Not him. He was one of the best in the unit. He had been the most successful, the most fearsome of all the Phoenix Program members. Killing was his game, his skill. How could he feel remorse for anyone who was Viet Cong?

Staring down at the body, the sound of bells suddenly echoed through the jungle, exploding in his mind, rushing like a runaway train. He looked up at the tree tops high above him, bewildered, searching for the source of the sound. As he tried to pierce the depths of blackness, his eyes narrowed into little slits. That ringing. What was it? Where was it? He turned around and around, confused by the constant blaring of the ringing, struggling to gain awareness in another reality. Anxiously, he tried to jump from one dimension to another, sought to escape the terrible ringing, but couldn't. He held his head in his hands, trying to keep out the noise. Frantically, he stuck his fingers in his ears, but the ringing continued, growing more intense by the second.

Despite the madness of the sound, he was sure, however, that he recognized it. It was familiar . . . almost reminded him of . . .

. . . his eyes snapped open.

The jungle gone, replaced by the darkness of his bedroom. The war had vanished along with the bloody remains of the Vietnamese girl and materialized into the annoying ring of a telephone lying on a night stand next to his bed.

He lay still, blinking at the ceiling, focusing on the slow turning movements of the fan whirling above him. Consciousness gradually returned, and with each blink he gained another fragment of reality. Breathing came in fast gulps, ebbing with each passing moment. His pulse was pounding as his heart worked overtime to cope with the intensity brought on by the dream. Gradually, calmness returned to him like an ocean storm subsiding into calm waves upon a gentle beach. After half a minute, he reached over and picked up the phone.

"Spencer."

A man's voice spoke from the other end of the line, faint and filled with anguish. It took a moment for the words to sink into Spencer's mind. At the moment, what clarity existed within his consciousness allowed room only for the simplest of thoughts.

Like slow poison worming its way through his circulatory system, the message was shocking and unbelievable. It took almost a full minute for him to shake the sleep and fathom the meaning.

"Are you certain?" he asked, seeking verification.

"Yes!" the speaker answered.

Spencer sighed deeply. He wiped his eyes with his free hand, trying to clear his vision. "Okay," he said, as he rose up and sat on the edge of the bed. "I'll be there as soon as possible."

The voice on the end of the line hung up. Spencer replaced the receiver to his phone and sat quietly for awhile, just staring at the floor as if some fragment of sanity would appear from the carpet. But it didn't.

He glanced at the clock sitting on the night stand. It was five a.m., and he normally would be getting dressed at this time to go to work. But the call would cause him to detour from his usual routine. Instead of going to his office in southeast Houston, he would have to travel southwest toward Richmond. There, he would begin the search for answers in a puzzle already brewing in his mind.

It was a puzzle he wished he could have neglected, but one that he knew he couldn't. It was his job to solve puzzles. He was good at it, and he loved the work. He believed in the idea of "doing good," not just being a "do gooder." There was a difference. But as most people usually discover at some point in their lives, with the good also comes the bad. And Spencer had seen plenty of "bad."

He had seen it in a war twenty-five years ago. And now he saw it in the same country that had sent him to that war. America had been divided in its resolve to fight aggression then. And true to form, it was still divided over how to fight against it now. Except this time, the aggression was in its own backyard.

Solutions were nonexistent to the violence running rampant in the streets of American cities. Piles of statistics verified this and verified that concerning the reasons for increased crime. Drugs, gangs, spousal, sexual, and child abuse were close behind under murder, rape, and assault. Violence was like a plague, and the most frightening thought was that there was no sign of a vaccine.

Opinions, on the other hand, on how to fight the war on drugs and violence in America's streets were a dime a dozen. It was the playground of the politician. They marveled the public with their stand on crime, made promises concerning legislature on gun control and rights for the common citizen. Rhetoric on crime became a book covered in the most fashionable designs, while one author after another filled the pages with empty solutions. It all boiled down to words versus action, and action hit the tax payer in the pocket book. So the reasonable conclusion to avoid that suggested another round of words from "want-a-be saviors" running for public office. In the meantime, the cop on the street went home after each shift with the real story of what was turning sour in the stomach of American society.

Spencer would have quit his job long ago if not for the fact that he cared about the innocent people trying to live normal lives. His opinion remained true to the big picture he saw being painted daily. And that picture read like a book. The theme was simple: "Violence ruled the streets of America, and there wasn't a damn thing being done about it."

As he sat on the edge of the bed, he wondered if there were some mystic madness surrounding his life. The dreams of yesterday had suddenly given way to the more daunting nightmare. If given a choice, he would have settled for the dreams. They only came in intangible scenarios of the past that neither took from nor gave to him. They merely tortured his conscience. But the nightmare had a more tangible nature, one composed of flesh and blood. He had experienced it all before on many occasions. It was the result of the graveyard of reality that he had chosen to walk in, an occupational hazard that could sometimes overwhelm and lead to destruction of the believer himself. The nightmare was a homicide, one of many that he had seen in his lifetime. Although all were different in their own respects in terms of events and evidence, all were nonetheless equal in the fact that death was the final product. But this time the nightmare was different. The victim was a *friend, . . . and a cop*.

He rose from the bed and walked into the bathroom, flipped on the light, walked over to the sink and turned on the water. After washing his face, he looked up at his reflection in the mirror.

What he saw was a Houston police captain who kept himself in shape by constantly working out with weights and running when he had the time. Even at forty-seven years of age, it didn't take one long to notice the lean muscular strength hidden beneath the confines of his clothing. He was tall: six foot two with a narrow waist and wide shoulders. His dark hair was straight and streaked with gray, and the green eyes he possessed could see through a liar in an instant. His face was square and rugged, and the firmness of his jaw exemplified a confidence born of experience.

He turned off the faucet, and suddenly threw the wash cloth into the shower as hard as he could. He was disgusted, as much by the phone call as by the dream.

Twenty-five years now he had suffered with the same gut-wrenching scenario. The jungle. The girl. It was like a plague, ripping at him from his insides like tiny organisms that ate a small piece of him each time the dream decided to venture forth from the bowels of his subconsciousness. It fed on him, devouring

his spirit, flirting with him, tormenting him with hollow laughter. Why couldn't it just be over? Why did the memory of that one incident remain with him? The girl had been an enemy soldier despite her gender and youth. There wasn't a doubt in his mind that she wouldn't have killed him given the chance. But still, he felt remorse. Or was it worse? Did he feel ashamed?

Forty-five minutes after he received the call, he pulled up next to a patrol unit that was parked in front of a motel room located just off I-59 south of Houston city limits. He killed the engine to the 'ninety-two Chevy he drove, got out and was instantly smothered by thick heat that had already begun to build from a hot morning sun.

He wore a blue cotton suit, white shirt with a black tie, black laced-up shoes, and a black belt. His hair was combed straight back. His appearance was neither expensive nor cheap. Basically, he would have preferred to work in jeans and a light undershirt. As an undercover cop he had once dressed in that manner. But along with rank came the duty to present an appearance of authority, and so he resigned himself to dress accordingly in a suit and suffer like everyone else on the force who had to endure the hot Texas heat during the summer months.

His face wet with sweat, he took a moment to absorb the scene.

Several patrol cars were stationed around the motel parking lot, their lights flashing. Two officers were busy securing the area around one of the motel rooms with yellow security tape. Another was taking statements from an old man from India who worked as the motel manager.

The motel was a long L-shaped structure, in good condition, but one that was usually utilized mostly by people on one-night stands. It had a large gravel parking lot, with brown siding on its exterior walls. The window facings and the doors were painted dark green. Black shingles covered the roof. Staggered up and down the sidewalk in front of the rooms were various bushy plants that the owner had planted for beautification purposes. The rates were cheaper than the fancier motels, but what lured people to its doors was the fact that it presented a sense of "sleaziness." And that alone could draw the crowds.

The officers at the scene saw Spencer and acknowledged him with a wave, then continued working. He waved back and then glanced over to where a white car was parked. He recognized the markings of the mobile crime lab. They would be busy searching for evidence, going over everything with a fine-tooth comb. Onlookers were gathering outside the roped-off area, trying to see what was going on inside room 106. Near them, a T.V. news crew was busy setting up equipment for a report.

A black police officer, dressed in a light brown suit, came to the doorway of the room and motioned to Spencer. He followed the officer inside where the lab team was conducting their search for evidence.

One lab tech was recording the scene with a camera, while another conducted a methodical search for any physical evidence that might help to solve the murder. A young female lab tech stood off to the side, scanning the walls for any signs of a fingerprint.

"Looks like one of our guys had a bad date, Captain," Detective Truman Fuller said, pointing to the bed. "He caught four in the back of the head. Ballistics will confirm, but looks like the killer used a small-caliber weapon."

Spencer stepped up closer to the foot of the bed. He nodded to the tech dusting for prints on the night stand. Sorrowfully, he looked down and studied the lifeless body of a man who had once been his friend.

The scene resembled a thousand such scenes that he had seen in his career. There were the usual results of murder: blood, death, the slow metabolic process a human body goes through when death occurs. Any detective would say this was a typical murder scene. But to Spencer, this murder *wasn't* typical. The man lying on the bed with a hole in his head was a cop, a cop that had once been his friend.

His eyes wandered over to the badge lying on the table. It was covered with specks of dried blood. He frowned, feeling as if he would be sick for the first time in years.

My God, David! . . . What happened to you?

Detective David Cooley had been a member of Spencer's unit, a veteran officer who had been decorated and served with distinction in the Houston Police Department for fifteen years. He had been Spencer's friend for ten of those years. The friendship had been a good one, despite the fact that Spencer had become his superior. Like many friends do, the two had drifted apart somewhat due to work schedules in the last year, but the friendship had remained viable.

Despite the scene he now witnessed, Spencer believed he knew everything there was to know about David Cooley. But he had been wrong.

He turned away and motioned for Fuller to follow him outside. "Any ideas?" he asked once they

were out of the room.

Fuller shook his head. "All we know at this moment is that he was here with a woman."

"Hooker?"

"Don't know. Witnesses said he entered the room with a woman who had long, dark hair at around nine p.m. We don't know if she was a hooker or just some woman he picked up at a bar."

"Any evidence of smudge marks or tattooing?"

"No, sir. . . . According to the angle of the entry wound, looks like the killer was somewhere beyond the foot of the bed."

"That would be my guess," Spencer answered. He thought a moment, then said, "You ever hear of a hooker killing a cop like this?"

"No, sir. Not any that I have ever known. . . . At least not with a gun."

Spencer took out a handkerchief and wiped his forehead. He was sweating profusely from the heat. "Has the team come up with anything that would determine the motive?"

"Nothing," Fuller said. "We know it wasn't robbery because his wallet is still in the room."

"Doesn't seem like a lovers' quarrel either," Spencer said, basing his theory on the fact that he had never known Cooley to lose his temper with a woman.

Fuller nodded. "I agree."

"Who found him?"

"A caller informed the manager to go check on the room. He did, and found this."

"Was the caller a man or a woman?"

"The manager said it sounded like a woman's voice."

"Two to one she's our killer."

"Or one of them, anyway."

"I'm curious," Spencer said, "why the woman called it in."

Fuller shrugged his shoulders, "I don't know. Maybe she's the type to get her jollies off on killing."

"Still," Spencer added, "we can't be sure until we find her and get some answers. She may have been a witness to the killing and simply wanted to inform about the incident."

"It's possible," Fuller answered, but neither he nor Spencer really believed that was the case.

Spencer studied the pavement of the parking lot. When he was in deep thought, he would stare down at his feet. Most of the cops who worked for him knew what was going on when he was looking straight down. "Any evidence of an accomplice" he asked, looking up after a moment.

"No, sir," Fuller said. "So far it appears to be a solo job. The witnesses can't tell if anyone else entered the room at a later time, so it's just guess work at the moment."

"Can any of the witnesses identify the woman?"

"They said no, but my guess is they could but just don't want to get involved."

"Any luck with prints yet?"

"Just a few smears," Fuller answered, frowning. "That's what bothers me. The killer didn't leave a single print anywhere. If this was done by a girlfriend or a hooker, then they wouldn't have been so careful. They may have made an attempt to cover the trail, but not this good. This has the smell of a professional hit if you ask me."

"At this point," Spencer said, "it's just pure speculation." He wiped his forehead again. The heat was getting worse so he motioned for Fuller to step over to where shade from a tree provided some relief from the sun's rays. "Any idea how long he's been dead," he asked Fuller once they were out of the sunlight.

"The lab boys guess he was killed somewhere between one a.m. and three a.m. The call came in around four and it's now six a.m. Rigor mortis hasn't really set in, so it had to be within a five-hour time frame."

"Probably killed sometime around three," Spencer speculated.

"How do you figure?" Fuller asked.

Spencer looked off, staring at nothing, but seeing his past as if it were yesterday. "Because that's when I would have done it. I would wait until the mid-morning hours, do the job, then sneak away. This place is probably dead around that time. No one would even notice or care who did what."

Fuller turned and gazed back into the room. What he had seen in there disturbed him. He had worked with Cooley on several cases, and the thought of a fellow officer being gunned down in such a manner made him angry. "Damn lousy way to die!" he said. "He didn't have a chance."

"I agree," Spencer said. "It was cruel."

He felt the same thing Fuller did. Anytime a cop was killed, it sent a shudder through every police officer on the force. It was a frightening reminder of the real possibilities that existed out in the street. Life and death was not some game that was played by actors. The violence against police officers was real and deadly. A new form of brutality had swept over the country as a result of the influence of "crack cocaine." Where once the officer had to contend with the adult criminal, now the threat came from the angry, neglected teenager. The age of the gang member had dropped to where enrollment was as early as eight years old. Killers prowled the streets in little ten-year-old bodies. It was no wonder why attitudes of law enforcement personnel were fashioned by the reality of the street. In order to meet fire with fire, the officer had to psych his/herself up to the same level of intensity they would face on the street. What it all boiled down to was survival.

The old cliche of "us against everybody else" could easily be argued as a misleading concept of police attitudes by those whose job it was to maintain and uphold the integrity of the force. But for those officers who faced danger on the street every day and night, it was a creed that was internalized by every member of the force. Because in truth, there wasn't anyone else going to back you up in that dark alley other than the guy who was wearing the same uniform as yourself. Being killed was a threat a police officer faced every day. The idea that "out there" the bogey man is real and deadly, was a fact of life every cop had to drill into his mind in order to stay on the job.

"This is a mess!" Spencer said to Fuller after a long silence. "It's bad enough to have one of our own gunned down, but to have it happen in a shithole like this. Well . . ."

"I understand, sir," Fuller said, knowing what was really bothering Spencer. Cooley had a wife and two kids. It would be painful enough to know that he had been killed, but to find out that he had died in a situation like this would only add to the hurt.

"You want me to tell his wife, sir?" Fuller asked, knowing that Spencer and Cooley had been friends.

Spencer shook his head. "No. I'll do it. I've got some questions to ask her. It won't be easy, but I have to know if she knew of anyone David could have been having an affair with. Right at the moment, that's all we have. The witnesses are no good to us if they can't identify the woman."

Fuller hesitated a moment, then asked the question that Spencer had been asking himself since arriving. "What the hell was he doing here, sir?"

Spencer shook his head. "I'm not sure." He kicked at some small rocks. "The David Cooley I thought I knew wouldn't have been here. Looks like I was mistaken about the man." He turned to survey the crime scene once more before he left. "Have you searched the outside perimeter yet?"

"All done," Fuller answered. He knew what Spencer wanted from his detectives and he tried to think ahead. "We got on it first thing. Every inch of this place has been covered."

Spencer nodded, satisfied with the way Fuller was handling things. "Very well. I guess I'll leave everything to you. If you need me for anything, I'll be at David's house."

Fuller frowned. "I don't envy you that job."

"It won't be easy," Spencer answered. He shook his head, still not believing what he had seen in the motel room. "Stay on top of this one, Truman. I want to find the person responsible for this."

Fuller nodded eagerly. "Don't worry, Captain. It may take us awhile, but we'll break the case."

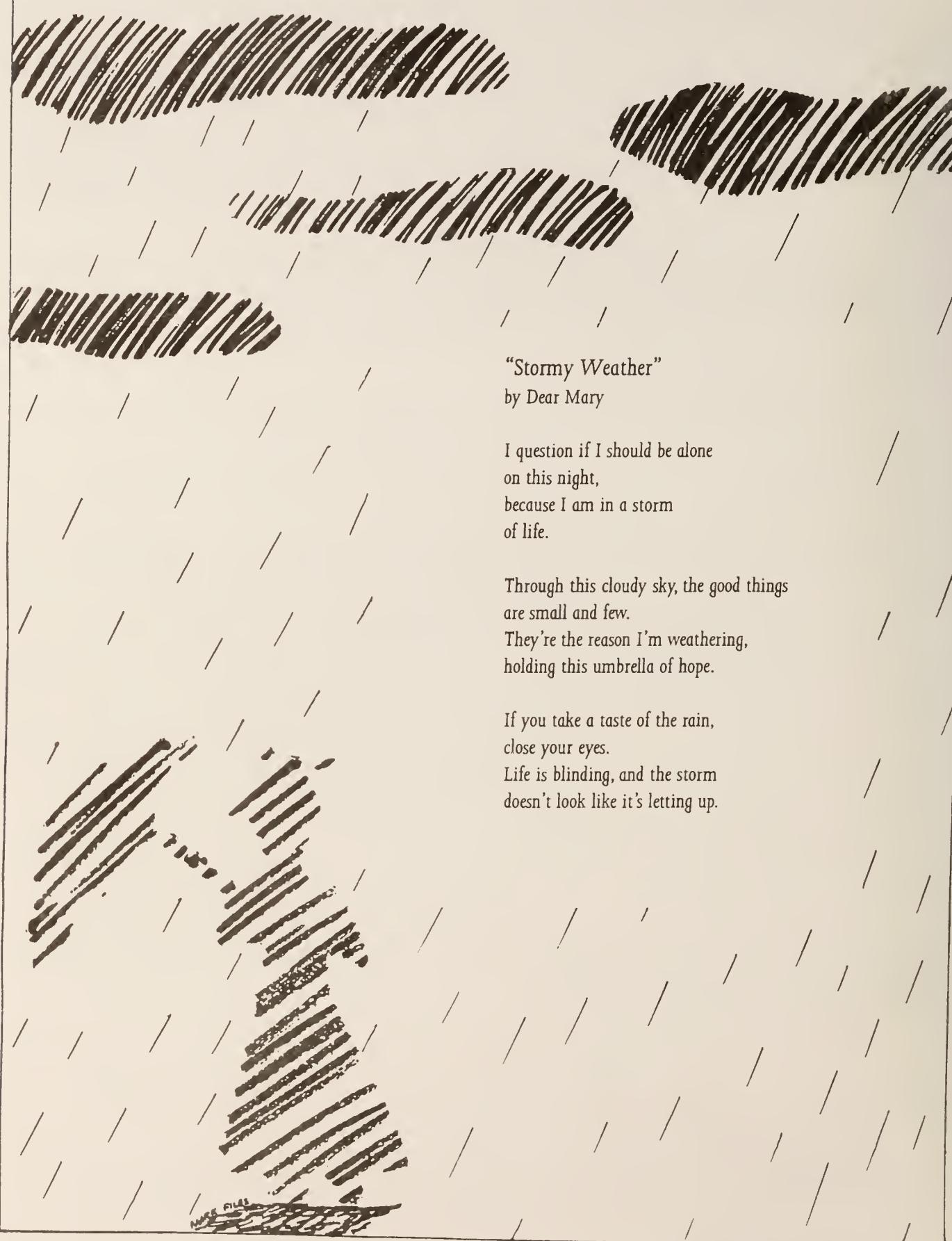
Spencer remained under the shade of the tree while Fuller returned to the room. He looked around the parking lot, trying to imagine what had happened here. Then after a minute, he walked back to his car, got in and headed the Chevy back toward Houston. As he drove, his mind raced with a thousand questions of why David Cooley might have been shot.

Had it been a hooker, a jealous husband, or had he been set up for a hit? The more he thought about the situation, the more he couldn't make any sense out of the matter. Nobody kills a cop for no reason—except a nut. It was simply bad business for anyone to do so. The person responsible would face fierce retribution once they were caught. Some cops had been known to kill in revenge. He sensed something ominous about this whole affair. At the moment, there were plenty of questions and no answers.

What were you doing in that motel room, David?

Disgusted by the turn of events, he took his anger out on the accelerator. He gunned the engine and the Chevy built up speed as he passed a sign that read: "HOUSTON CITY LIMITS."

Note: If you are interested in reading this story in its entirety, please check for a complete copy on reserve at Watson Library under Argus.



"Stormy Weather"
by Dear Mary

I question if I should be alone
on this night,
because I am in a storm
of life.

Through this cloudy sky, the good things
are small and few.
They're the reason I'm weathering,
holding this umbrella of hope.

If you take a taste of the rain,
close your eyes.
Life is blinding, and the storm
doesn't look like it's letting up.



Untitled - Renee Foote



Twist

By Jessica Mentzel

Everywhere I turn I see you,
Standing there, in the corner of my mind.
Your voice whispering,
Through my heart.
The wind breaths a heavy sigh,
And the rain streaks down my cheeks,
Over my body,
And onto the shore.
Waves crashing through time,
Ripping through my soul,
Into my heart, my life.
I look for you.
Then you're there,
Like a dream,
That never wants to end.
A circle,
with no end, and no beginning.
You reach out your hand,
Like a savior from another world,
In another time, long ago.
I look at you with sad, loving eyes.
Then I see your hand,
And mine grasping it.

Mention the Ocean

by Valerie Clark

Mention the Ocean to me as I close my eyes
to the blue skies above.
Tell me a story of gentle winds
on open fields of green.
Paint me a picture so full of colour
as my heart is full of wonder and awe.
Give me a dream more vivid
than truth really is.
Pluck me a rose from a flaming bush
of golden leaves and thorns of blood.
Blow me a kiss surrounded with love,
and I shall never thirst for another soul again.





Freedom - John Shamburger
Honorable Mention Spring Art

[inner light]
by Christa Hopkins

her fingertips are pressed together—a vault joining
chin and lips to tip of nose like small, stern hands at prayer;
meridian digits divide the face in hemispheres:
a light rising in the east throws shadow across the west.

absent the glowing aspect of the sanctified,
eyes not uplifted but turned, glaring, inward,
hollowed ivory cheeks frame faded-petal lips and rise
toward unconscious jet balconies shading jaded green eyes.

UNTITLED

by Angelica Kraushaar

papercut love
narrow, painful
gone in a few days
much rather a fine china teacup love
too delicate to use
kept in a cabinet for decades
only to be broken
during a careless search for a dinner plate
never want an iron pot love
heavy, unbending
hot
covered so that nothing escapes
settle for a rubberband love
yielding, growing
bouncing back
can be stretched to breaking
potentially dangerous
yet pliable and elastic enough to last

Ballad

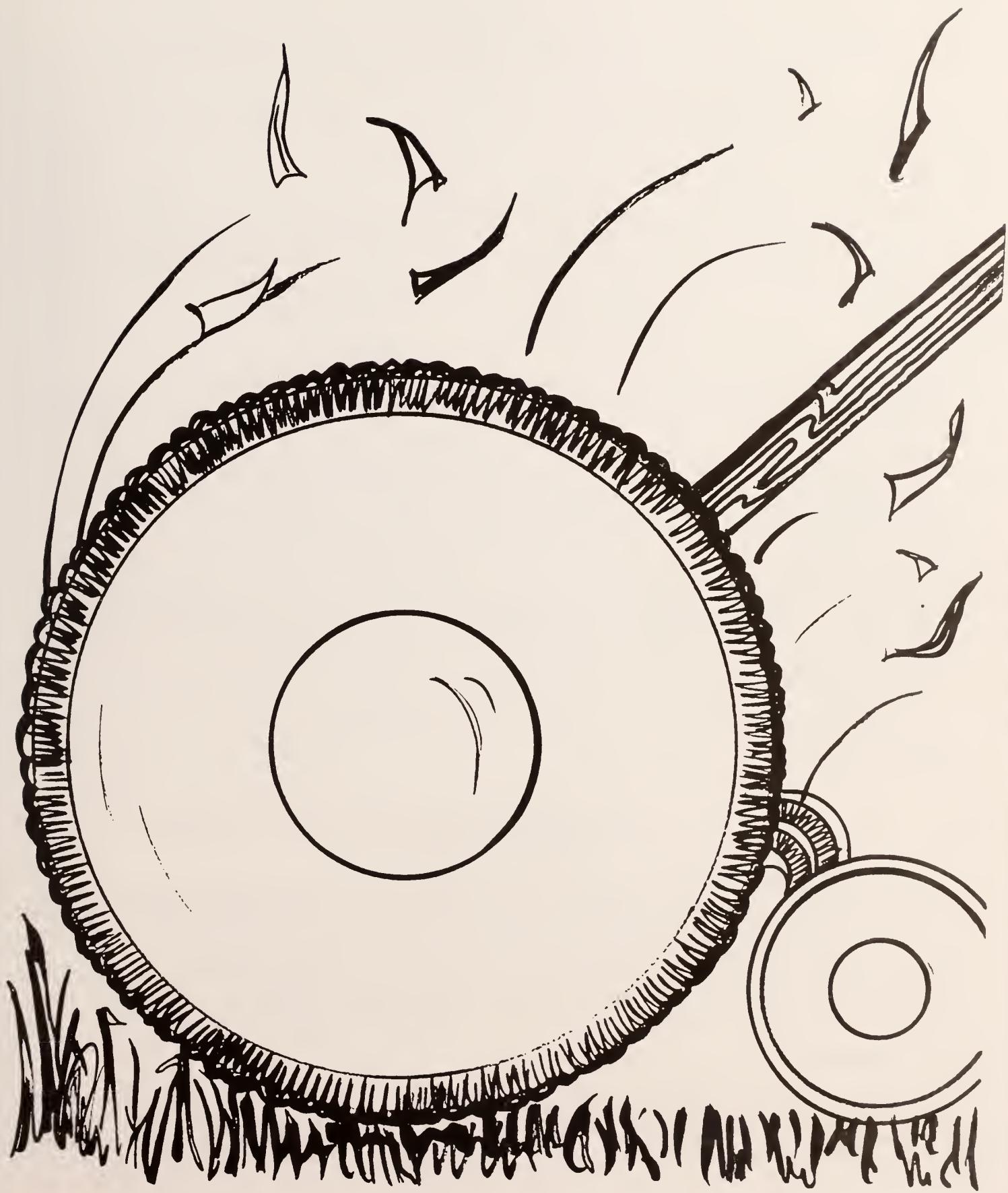
by Julie Tisdale

**you used me once
you used me twice
blind i can not see
but when you finally open wide
you'll burn eternally**

**My eyes will fire
My tongue will spark
and twist you into pain
your sharp retort will strand you
I'll laugh to see you maimed**

**and then I'll take it
in my hand
your manhood and your pride
and lead you to the fireplace
and burn you down to size.**





Signifyin(g) as a Rhetorical Device in African-American Literature

by Rodney Lain
First Place Spring Nonfiction Winner

You can never really get your point across to a person until you learn how to communicate with him. If he speaks French, you can't speak German. You have to know what language he speaks and then speak to him in that language.

Malcolm X

Some of the best dozens players were girls. . . . Before you can signify you got to be able to rap. . . . Signifying allowed you a choice—you could either make a cat feel good or bad. If you had just destroyed someone or if they were down already, signifying could help them over. Signifying was also a way of expressing your own feelings. . . . Signifying at its best can be heard when the brothers are exchanging tales.

H. "Rap" Brown

Signification is the Nigger's occupation.¹

Traditional Saying

Commencing in the middle of the 17th century and concluding almost 200 years later, the Africa/America slave trade furnished untold millions of blacks bodies to fuel the American machine called the southern cotton industry. An unfortunate side effect of this institutionalized system of oppression was the cultural rape of slaves brought to colonial America, which replaced their African traditions with things American. At first glance, one could say that insatiable colonial greed resulted in the mass elimination of a culture, but this isn't quite the truth. Instead, it produced a hybrid, parallel culture—not really American, not exactly African, and yet, having characteristics of both. Through the crucible of slavery, Africanisms—customs, values, and rituals—were ostensibly stamped out; however, many survived the horrific Middle Passage, fixing themselves into the foundation of a nascent "African-American" culture. This new culture developed its own language, considered by many to be a corruption of the "good" English tongue: it sounded like English, but wasn't accepted as such. An Africa-influenced system of syntax and phonology flourished throughout the years, adopting English words into black parlance, creating its own words when necessary. Some studies of black speech patterns have shown that Africa affected its Americanized progeny more than previously believed, helping to create a distinctly black discourse community. A salient feature of this community is "Signifyin(g)," the term popularized by literary critic Henry Louis Gates.² Not the sole province of African Americans, signifyin(g), or signification, exists as a verbal ritual in the African-American community nevertheless, bearing the indelible stamp of that quality termed "blackness."

Defined in the simplest terms, signifyin(g) is the "verbal art of ritual insult," writes sociolinguist Geneva Smitherman in her germinal book, Black Talk (1994), a lexicon of trans-generational, core, in-group lingo (206). When one signifies, in the black sense he or she

puts down, needles, or talks about (signifies on) someone, to make a point or sometimes just for fun. It exploits the unexpected, using quick verbal surprises and humor, and it is generally characterized by nonmalicious and principled criticism. (206)

In short, it is stylized wordplay, a "style-focused message . . . styling which is foregrounded by the devices of making a point by indirection and wit" (qtd. in Gates 78). In the African-American community, this wordplay is a favorite pastime. The remainder of this essay delineates this African-American pastime further, and gives an overview of its use in the tradition; it also traces signifyin(g) to the folkloric tales of the African-American trickster figure, the Signifying Monkey. Reading this traditional tale reveals signification as an ubiquitous, inherently-black feature of the African-American speech community; the subsequent history of signifyin(g) shows that it is inextricably linked to black Americans and proves that it really is the "Nigger's occupation."

The Signifying Monkey

In her 1935 anthropological collection, Mules and Men, Zora Neale Hurston records scores of African-American folktales, or "lies," as they are called, since most of them are so humorous that they can't possibly be true

(19). These lies are narratives chock full of wit and humor, their sole purpose to help while away the time (The Book of Negro Folklore viii). Usually consisting of personified animals and other trickster heroes, many have the monkey as a central figure. The monkey is such a recurring character that Hurston, with tongue placed firmly in cheek, made the following observation:

No matter where you find the brother in black, he is telling a story about his brother the monkey. Different languages and geography, but that same tenderness. There is recognition of the monkey as a brother. Whenever we want to poke a little fun at ourselves, we throw the cloak of our shortcomings over the monkey. This is the American classic. (Dust Tracks on a Road 219)

Extrapolating from these comments, it can be safe to say that Hurston, a veritable student of the oral tradition, had probably heard tales of the Signifying Monkey. Dating back to pre-slavery Africa, the Signifying Monkey can be traced to his African progenitor, the trickster god of Yoruba mythology, Esu-Elegbara. In Yorubic culture, Esu, the messenger of the gods, serves as the divine mediator, transmitting information from the gods to man and vice versa. Esu and the Signifying Monkey both embody, according to Gates, “satire, parody, irony . . . indeterminacy, open-endedness, ambiguity, sexuality, chance, uncertainty, disruption and reconciliation, betrayal and loyalty” (The Signifying Monkey 6). Trickster figures also appear in other cultures—the closest to Esu’s mythological equal probably being Hermes, from which we get hermeneutics, the study of principles of the interpretation of texts. Tales of Esu evolved and came to America beginning in 1619 when the first Africans were deposited on the banks of Jamestown Harbor. The Signifying Monkey spun off from tales of Esu, eventually establishing his own identity in the African-American tradition (20).

Told in a rhyming fashion, the Signifying Monkey tales, or “toasts” as Roger Abrahams calls them, chronicle the dialogic encounters of the monkey and the lion (99). In his book Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia, Abrahams, an anthropologist, linguist, and folklorist, tells us that a toast is a

narrative poem, which is recited, often in a theatrical manner, and represents the greatest flourishing of negro verbal talent. Quite often they are long, lasting anywhere from two to ten minutes. They conform to a general, but by no means binding framing pattern. This consists of (1) some sort of picturesque or exciting introduction, (2) action alternating with dialogue . . . and (3) a twist ending of some sort, either a quip, ironic comment, or a brag. (99-100)

Following this pattern to varying degrees, the Monkey tales are permutations of a basic plot: the monkey (the signifier) begins a seemingly harmless conversation with the lion (the signified) that has painful repercussions. Traditionally formulaic, the tales commence with some variant of the following lines:

The Monkey and the Lion
Got to talking one day.
Monkey looked down and said, “Lion,
I hear you’s king in every way.
But you know somebody
Who do not think that is true—
He told me he could whip
The living daylights out of you.” (“The Signifying Monkey” 261)

In addition to the stock characters, the lion, the monkey, and elephant, the tales also include another important standard narrative element—the monkey plays the instigator, falsely stating that the elephant was playing the dozens on the lion, a form of verbal jousting in which the participants increasingly insult each other’s female family members.

Lion said, “Who?”
Monkey said, “Lion, he talked about your mama
And talked about your grandma, too,
And I’m too polite to tell you
What he said about you.”³

Abrahams records several other versions in his study of Philadelphia adolescents. These versions, unabashedly unexpurgated, add even more color to the monkey and the lion’s dialogue. One teen-age informant begins the tale like so:

Deep down in the jungle so they say
There's a signifying monkey down the way.
There hadn't been no disturbin' for quite a bit,
For up jumped the monkey in the tree one day and laughed,
"I guess I'll start some s---t." (Deep Down in the Jungle 149-150)

Conclusions, too, are pretty contrived. The aforementioned "clean" version ends with:

"Monkey," said the Lion,
Beat to his unbooted knees,
"You and your signifying children
Better stay up in the trees."
Which is why today
Monkey does his signifying
A-way-up out of the way. ("The Signifying Monkey" 263)

Akin to epic poetry, these tales are a study in black culture, in particular black language use; they easily exemplify signification, which J. L. Dillard and Abrahams define respectively as the act of "communicating (often an obscene or ridiculing message) by indirection" and a type of "indirect argument or persuasion" (Dillard 177; "Playing the Dozens" 302). This, coupled with Smitherman and Gates' definitions, shows us that the monkey obviously is signifyin(g). A crucial point in the poem is the monkey's talking the lion into fighting the elephant. He does this through his signifyin(g), his "indirection and wit." In order to get the lion to fight, he can't very well suggest it outright, so he indirectly does so by lying, saying that the elephant talked about the lion's mother. Anyone, surely not the "king of the jungle," would suffer that.

Reporting the elephant's alleged dozens playing serves as the impetus for the rest of the toast. The monkey's signifyin(g) (talking the lion into a fight by telling him that the elephant talked about his mama) infuriates the lion to the point of confronting the elephant and a fight ensues. Soundly defeated by the elephant and wanting swift revenge after realizing he has been signified upon, the lion seeks out the monkey. Safely perched on his tree limb, the monkey continues to goad the lion, and, while doing so, slips and falls out of the tree. Immediately, the lion pounces upon the monkey, ready to mete out vengeance. His life in jeopardy, the monkey, through sheer verbal virtuosity, outwits the lion again.

"Please," said the Monkey, "Mister Lion,
If you'll just let me go,
I got something to tell you, please,
I think you ought to know." (263)

The hapless lion concurs, only to discover that he has been signified upon once more.

Lion let Monkey loose
To see what his tale could be—
And Monkey jumped right back up
Into his tree. (263)

Ever the instigator, the monkey, satisfied that he is out of harm's way, again resumes his verbal fusillade.

"What I was gonna tell you," said Monkey,
"Is you square old so-and-so,
If you fool with me I'll get
Elephant to whip your head some more." (263)

And so it goes. Thus ends the story, with the monkey outsmarting the lion, avoiding a fight, and saving his life.

In addition to being a representation of signifyin(g), a closer reading of these poems exhibits another characteristic indigenous to the black community: meta-discourse, discourse about discourse. African Americans, more than other ethnic groups, have a remarkably greater proclivity to labeling and categorizing their utterances, analyzing each other's, as well as their own word manipulations, giving birth to terms like signifyin(g) (Talking Black 36). A cursory observation of black speech acts is enough to convince us that black language use involves a prodigious amount of this rhetorical self-analysis. Abrahams avers that this self-analysis catalyzes a type of communal bonding:

We recognize then, this sense of community in Black speaking in a good many ways—not least of which is the kind and intensity of talk about talk one encounters in conversations and in special in-group names given by the speakers to ways of talking. Such Black terms for speech events constitute one important dimension of their system of speaking and focus on speech use in very different ways from the usages of Euro-American discourse. (Talking Black 36; emphasis mine)

It warrants repeating that this “talk about talk,” this cataloguing of speech events, occurs among American blacks with a consistency and frequency unmatched in any other American sub-culture. The tales of the Signifying Monkey exemplify this linguistic self-reflexiveness in several ways. First, as the monkey signifies upon the lion (an intentional signifyin(g) utterance, consciously twisting words at the semantic level and deceiving the lion by verbal sleight-of-hand); second, the lion realizes (eventually) that the monkey is signifyin(g), learning the hard way that the monkey shouldn’t be taken literally; third the author of this traditional poem explicitly employs signification, literally spelling it out for the reader—it’s not just any monkey, it’s the Signifying Monkey; and fourth, the reader is aware of the signification as a rhetorical device, noticing the first three levels of self-reflexiveness. As a text, the poem talks about talk to the reader, and the fictional monkey and lion talk about talk by acknowledging the act of signification that’s being played out. These tales show that signifyin(g), as used in the African American oral literate traditions, is more than a rhetorical device, it is a tool for rhetorical analysis. Furthermore, it is a linguistic adhesive, understandably so, for cementing the cultural commonality known as the American black experience.

Sweet Talk, Loud-talking, Playing the Dozens . . .

In addition to providing a plethora of recorded examples of signification, the African-American literary tradition also gives alternate descriptions for this speech act. Each synonym for signifyin(g) describes its various characteristics—it has been given black terms like siggin, clappin, joaning, playing the dozens, lugging, and loud-talking (Gates 82; Smitherman 120; Talking Black 46). Abrahams has culled over 20 other terms from various scholarship:

talking [trash], woofing, spouting, mucky muck, boogerbang, beating your gums, talking smart, putting down, putting on, playing, sounding, telling lies, shag-lag, marking, shucking, jiving, jitterbugging, bugging, mounting, charging, cracking, harping, rapping, bookooing, low-rating, hoorawing, sweet-talking. (qtd. in Gates 77-78)

Used interchangeably, these terms, though fine descriptions all, serve best as subsets of a broader definition of signification. Signification has acquired, and needs, all of these terms in order to accommodate the millions of black Americans who employ this rhetorical strategy. Each geographic region has its respective terms, but they all refer to a core group of common characteristics known collectively as signification; central to the definition are indirection and wit.

In her book Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America (1977), sociolinguist Geneva Smitherman gives eight general characteristics of signifyin(g):

1. indirection, circumlocution
2. metaphorical-imaginistic (but images rooted in the everyday, real world)
3. humorous, ironic
4. rhythmic fluency and sound
5. teachy but not preachy
6. directed at person or persons usually present in the situational context
7. punning, a play on words
8. introduction of the semantically or logically unexpected. (121)

A piece of discourse can be defined as signification if it includes all or a combination of these characteristics. Maya Angelou’s poem “No Loser, No Weeper,” for example, doesn’t meet all of the criteria, but does exemplify signification quite well:

“I hate to lose something,”
then she bent her head
“even a dime, I wish I was dead.
I can’t explain it. No more to be said.
Cept I hate to lose something.”

"I lost a doll once and cried for a week.
She could open her eyes, and do all but speak
I believe she was took, by some doll-snatching sneak
I tell you, I hate to lose something."
"A watch of mine once, got up and walked away.
It had twelve numbers on it and for the time of day.
I'll never forget it and all I can say
Is I really hate to lose something."

"Now if I felt that way bout a watch and a toy,
What you think I feel bout my lover-boy?
I ain't threatening you madam, but he is my evening's joy.
And I mean I really hate to lose something." (The Poetry of Maya Angelou 8)

Signifyin(g) can be seen at work on two levels. The first level, viewing the poem through the eyes of its reader, shows Angelou leading us through a long anecdote about lost possessions. All of this is to make a heretofore unrevealed point—don't mess with her man. The last verse qualifies it as a form of signification, since a clear(er) interpretation of the poem hinges upon the reading of the last verse, the "introduction of the logically unexpected." On the second level, which puts the reader within the scene depicted, we witness the soliloquy that the narrator performs. With the same unexpected announcement, the narrator could be telling a friend or foe about her significant other, verbally staking her claim.

There are no length requirements when labeling an utterance as a form of signification; its denotation doesn't always consist of a lengthy piece of discourse, like the above example. It can be either a "witty one-liner, a series of loosely related statements, or a coherent discourse on one point"—Angelou's poem can be seen as one-point, coherent discourse (Talkin and Testifyin 121). The witty one-liner can be a useful weapon in one's rhetorical arsenal, like the caustic rejoinder "your mama," or "ask your mama." This is usually enough to commence, or end, a round of the dozens, as this excerpt from Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man (1990) shows us by incorporating an inadvertent play of the dozens into this dialogue between the novel's unnamed protagonists and his friend, Brother Jack.

"His personal responsibility," Brother Jack said.
"Did you hear that, Brother? Did I hear him correctly?"
"Where did you get it, Brother," he said. "This is astounding, where did you get it?"
"From your Ma—" I started and caught myself in time. (Qtd. in Talkin and Testifyin 131)

As mentioned earlier, the goal of the dozens is to quip on either another participant or his or her family members. It isn't uncommon to hear the dozens in the form of rhyming couplets; however, they can consist of an exchange of one-liners.

No one knows exactly where and how the dozens developed. Smitherman believes it "probably comes from the fact that the original verses [of the dozens] involved twelve sex acts, each stated in such a way as to rhyme the numbers 1 to 12" (Talkin and Testifyin 132). John Dollard records a sample of this bawdy playground rhyme:

I _____ your mammy one;
She said, "You've just begun."
...
I _____ her seven;
She said, "I believe I'm in heaven."
...
I _____ her twelve;
She swore she was in Hell." (279)

Dollard sustains Smitherman's hypothesis about the dozens' etymology, saying that it "may be this pattern [that] has given its name to the whole behavior" (280).

A more subtle form of signification occurs in Alston Anderson's short story, "Signifying" (which happens to be preceded by another story entitled "The Dozens"). Here, the main character, a "lover man," tries to seduce one of his neighbors, a female school teacher; but he doesn't want his intentions to be so obvious. He begins his seduction when he defends her honor by interrupting a group of men that signifies on her physical attributes:

One day I was standing outside the barbershop with some of the boys. Miss Florence come by on her way home from the schoolhouse, and they got to signifying:

"Mmmmm-mph! What a fine day this is!"

"Yes, Lawd, it sho is."

"My, my, what a purty day!"

"How do, Miss Florence!"

"How do you do."

"Yes, Lawd, I'd sleep in the streets fawdy days and fawdy nights for a day like that!"

"Y'all hush your signifying," I said. "That there's a lady, and I won't have y'all signifying 'bout her like that."

I said it in a tone of voice that wasn't loud, but I knew she heard it. Next time I seen her she had a nice little smile for me, but I acted just like nothing had ever happened. (20-21)

This excerpt underscores another aspect of signification; here it means "to talk with great innuendo"; it also consists of "a whole complex of expressions and gestures," along with an element of "indirect argument and persuasion" (Deep Down in the Jungle 54; "Playing the Dozens" 302). The men in Anderson's story signify along these lines: they comment on the lady as she approaches and as she passes, knowing that she hears them. Although they speak indirectly ("What a fine day this is!"), everyone involved knows who and what is being talked about, including the schoolmarm, the object of their attention. When reading the above conversation, their "sweet-talk" may be rendered meaningless to some readers, if they can't imagine the much-needed intonations, facial expressions, and gestures that are crucial features of signifyin(g). Also, this exchange shows a positive side of signifyin(g). As H. "Rap" Brown says in the epigraph, signifyin(g) can either "make a cat feel good or bad" (Brown 355). The narrator makes the lady feel good, favorably signifyin(g) upon her himself by loud talking (which is defined below). Of course, "Miss Florence" doesn't feel too bad about receiving her admirers' rhetorical attention, since she greets the narrator on a later day with a "nice little smile."

In addition to the signification illustrated in Anderson's work, African Americans also enjoy a not-so-subtle form of signifyin(g) commonly called "loud-talking," also known as "naming" and "louding" (Gates 77, 78, 82). "A person is loud-talking," Abrahams tells us, "when he says something of someone just loud enough for that person to hear, but indirectly, so he cannot properly respond" (Talking Black 19). One successfully "loud-talks" by talking to others, or himself, loud enough for the intended listener to hear. "A sign of success of this practice is an indignant 'what?' from the third person, to which the speaker responds 'I wasn't talking to you.' Of course, the speaker was, yet simultaneously was not" (Gates 82). Claudia Mitchell-Kernan calls this "obscuring the addressee" (314). She illustrates it with the following:

I: Man, when you gon pay me my five dollars?

II: Soon as I get it.

I: (to audience) Anybody want a five dollar nigger? I got one to sell.

II: Man, if I gave you five dollars, you wouldn't have nothing to signify about.

I: Nigger, long as you don't change, I'll always have a subject. (321)

Speaker I's second statement constitutes the act of loud-talking. Ostensibly directing his comments toward the audience, he intentionally provokes the subsequently defensive response from speaker II, leaving room and reason for him to respond again with another biting rejoinder.

Far from an exhaustive presentation of signifyin(g), these examples give ample illustration of this language tool in the literature of the African American. Some of the literature produced by black writers showcase this speech act, along with other linguistic features of the black experience.

The Oral Tradition

Many black writings referred to, dwelled on, and incorporated in their contexts what's known as the "oral tradition." The oral tradition consists of stories, songs, jokes, proverbs, and other cultural trappings that are passed on by word of mouth, not written record (Black Talk 29). Smitherman says it includes the toasts and verbal rituals like signifyin(g), and that it could be extended to include today's rap music, since its features of the tradition are the "call-and-response pattern," the "purposely related phrase," and other forms of rhythmic speech (Huggins 230). Nathan Irving Huggins, in his historical assessment, Harlem Renaissance, deems these features of black culture to be, not only its identifying markers, but its essence. He says that all of

these characteristics are elements of an oral tradition that the Afro-American sustained. These devices originally served to make the performer independent of written words or music, but eventually even the written words and music of black Americans resonated to this powerful

tradition. The act and technique of this "literature" were never taught in school. Yet, they were "natural" with black people. . . . These techniques became part of the Negro's written language as well. Sometimes it is a fault. . . . But sometimes it worked well. (230)

Signifyin(g) is part of this Africanized folk culture, and few took it as seriously as the Afro-Americans who used it in their writings. Embracing this culture with zealous negritude, epitomized by authors like Zora Neal Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Sterling Brown, African-American literature celebrated black culture. These writings articulated the heretofore unvoiced tone and timbre of contemporary black speech, black social mores, and black people. These writings were read at first by Afro-Americans solely, but eventually, through movements like the Harlem Renaissance, they crossed over to non-blacks who recognized the rich culture that stood behind the printed words. These writings were subsequently canonized along with their literary descendants, heralding them as signal works in the annals of not only African-American, but American letters.

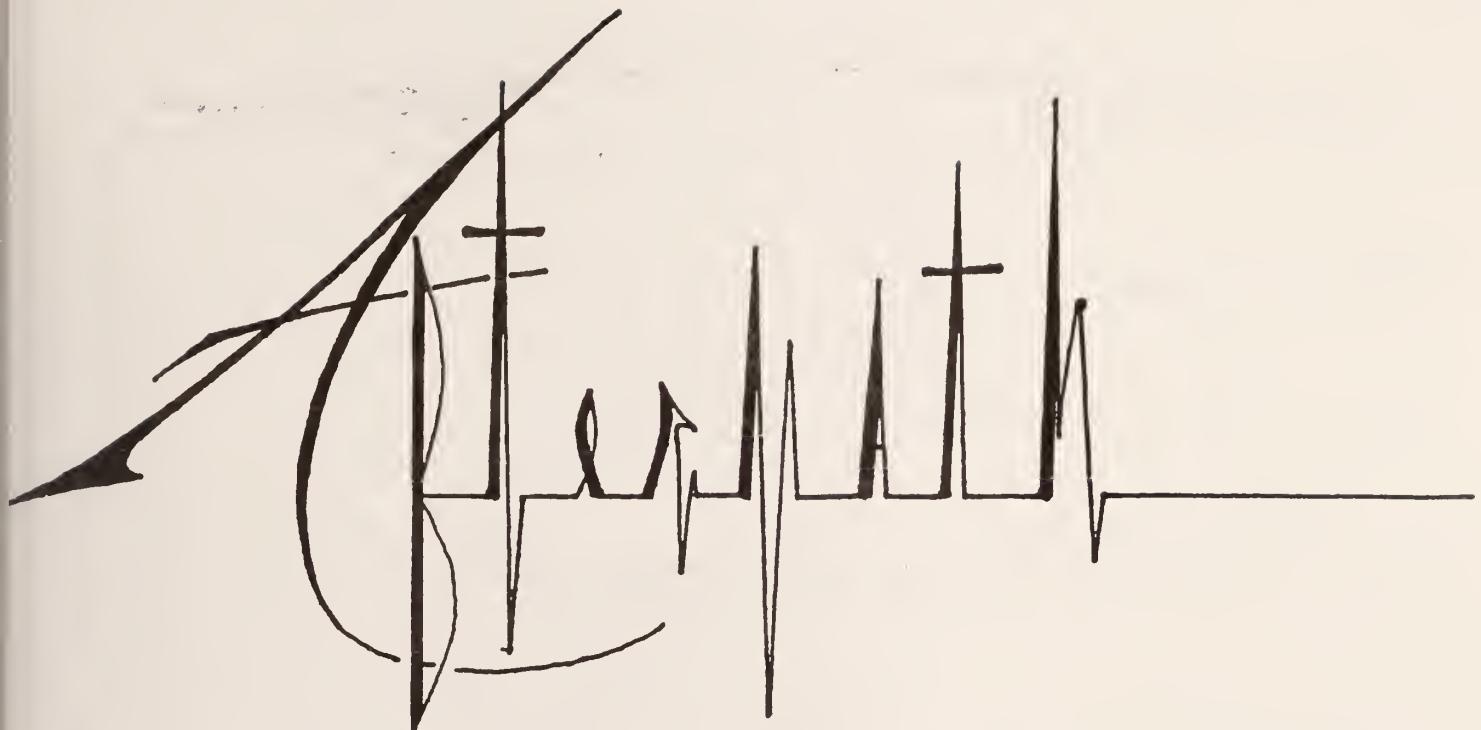
¹ Although the word is offensive to some, "nigger" has no pejorative meaning when used in an all-black milieu. As Claude Brown writes in his essay, "The Language of the Soul," terms like "my nigger" may actually be terms of endearment. I use interchangeably nigger and other terms that African Americans use to describe themselves, like the word "black," which I employ mainly for its linguistic simplicity; others, like "Afro-American" and "Negro," are used where historically appropriate.

² When denoting African-American signification, Smitherman drops the terminal "g" (signifyin) and Gates uses a parenthetical "g"; both emphasize the "blackness" of the term. My notation will be "signifyin(g)," as opposed to Gates' "Signifyin(g)." My reasoning? When using the words signifying and signification, in the traditional sense, it conveys a markedly different meaning than the blacks convey. In the black sense, it refers to the use of language, not the assigning of meaning(s), which is the common denotation. To put it another way, black people don't "signify some thing; one signifies some way" (Gates 78).

³ ("The Signifying Monkey" 261.) I added the quotation marks for clarity. The version of this poem that I quote from doesn't contain them.

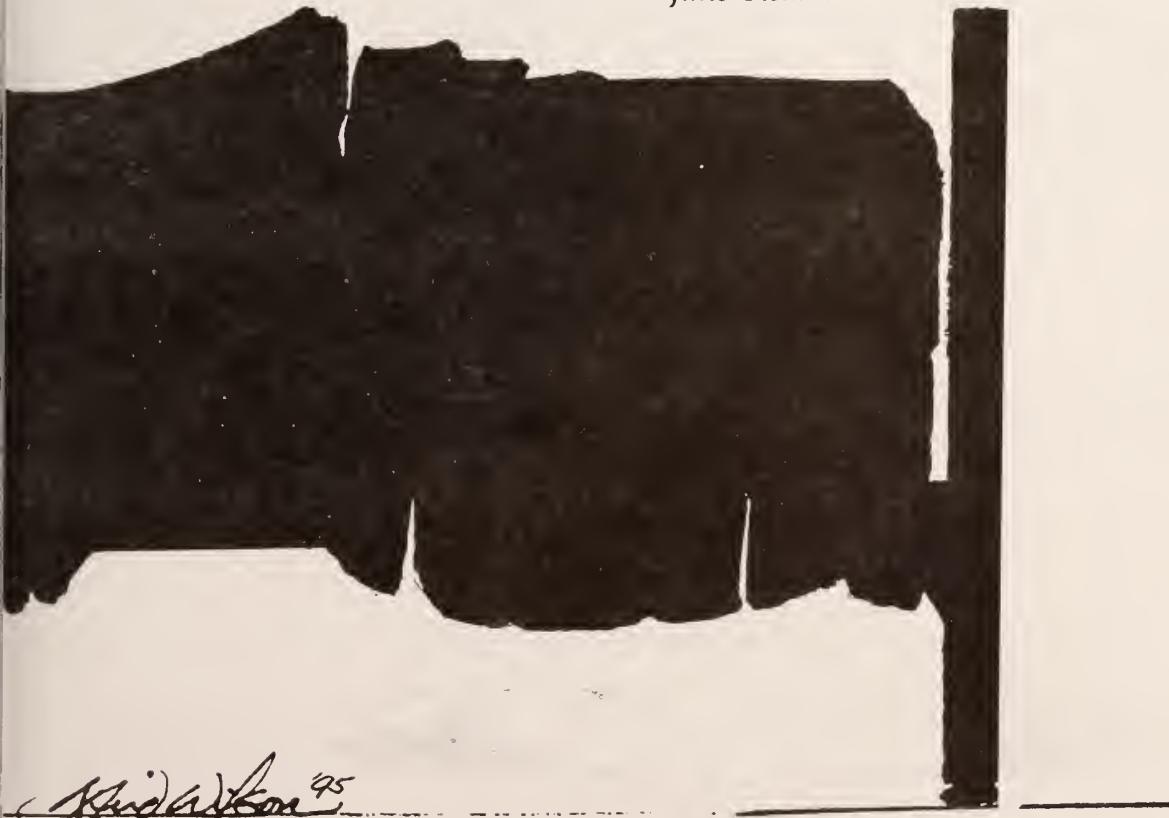
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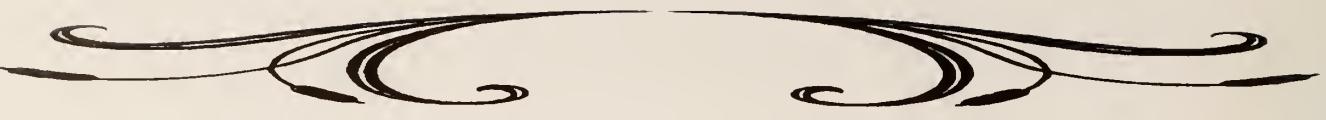
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I sit on the edge of his bed
a complete and total individual-alone
staring at the hospital white walls
carefully hung sports jackets
bored, basically
unchanged-
for the nasty taste in my mouth

Julie Tisdale





Brush Strokes

by Renee Foote

Searching for the perfect subject,
He finds her—
Dancing alone in the breeze,
Her slender body swaying.
Some petals stretching upward as if to grasp the sun;
Others slowly yawning outward in a stretch like that of a
lazy cat.

Awed by her loveliness
He aches to preserve what reality cannot.
His paintbrush like a magic wand,
He creates
—With gentle, careful strokes—
Her grace and solemn beauty.
His brush softly caressing her petals
Causing her to blush.
Every stroke a futile attempt to defend her
For he knows she will not survive.

As he touches her gently,
She begins to wither.
With every stroke of his brush
She becomes weary,
Her petals slowly descending to the ground
She bends
Slowly dying.
But he saved her—
An image
Preserved
From the suffocating embrace of time.

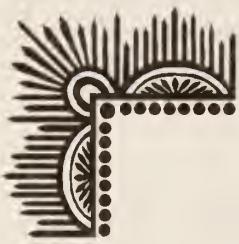
"STILL LIFE"

by Dear Mary

I MADE THIS.
IT WAS TO BE
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORK
I HAD EVER TURNED OUT.
UNTIL I DESTROYED IT,
TRYING TO CORRECT THINGS
NOT KNOWING HOW EASY
IT WAS TO DO,
OR HOW I WOULD REGRET
THE DECISION I MADE
IN A MINUTE.



Fairie Queen - John Shamburger



ROMANS 12:21

by dK

Third Place Spring Fiction Winner

She's twelve again, living out her past in her incessant mind, and once again Daddy's hands are upon her in those strange ways Daddy's hands always were. He would always touch her in such strange places and say, "That's Daddy's good girl." Sherryl had always wanted to be a good girl. She even thought it was her fault that Daddy's hands touched her in those strange places that they did. She took it upon herself to go to church the very next day and beg her God for forgiveness for anything she might have done to cause Daddy's hands to touch her in those strange places.

Such a good girl. She always loved church and her God. She read her Bible twice a day, even if it was something she had read before. Such a wonderful book, her Bible. It always made her forget about Daddy's hands touching her in her strange places.

Such a strange girl. Always kept to herself. She never talked much with the other kids. Every day after school, she would go to her room and read her Bible and talk with her God. It was the only way she knew to avoid Daddy's hands touching her in strange places. She would try her best to forget Daddy's hands and that it was her fault that they touched her in her strange places.

But here she is thirty years later, and she's twelve again, living out the past in her strange mind. Daddy's hands are upon her strange body, touching her in her strange places. She knew Daddy's hands didn't know her God. She had little faith that anyone knew her God. She knew her God on dark lonely days when her mother was out, and she would run far away from Daddy's hands. And yes, even when Daddy's hands were touching her in those strange places that Daddy's hands touched her, she knew her God well.

"*Daddy's hands, Daddy's hands! My God,*" she thinks, "*Daddy's hands!*"

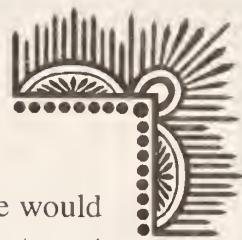
She's twelve again! The poor girl. Old enough to have children of her own, and here she is inside her own mind, trying to hide from Daddy's hands. Every black, pathetic day of her childhood races through her scarred head, and with every day comes those awful hands that she knows so well, touching her in those strange places where little girls should not be touched.

Forty-two again, and she opens her Bible. Not any verse in particular, she just lets her middle aged hands roam through the Book, turning the page like young lovers drifting through a familiar glade. And as young lovers do, her tired hands stop in their favorite of places: Romans.

She had always liked Romans far better than any other book in her Bible.

"12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."





Such a good woman. She grew up inside her Bible world. It's funny she would marry a man like she did. Roger, a mechanic, who never went to church, and spent most of his life drunk or drinking.

"13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantoness, not in strife and envying."

But he was the first man to ever touch her in those places that only Daddy's hands had been before.

And now she's eighteen again and Roger-the-mechanic has driven them down a long dark road after their first date at the local theater where Elizabeth Taylor paraded around for four hours as the eminent queen of Egypt.

"*What will Daddy's hands think if I come home late?*" she silently screams to herself as Roger-the-mechanic's hands slide over her knee towards those strange, strange places.

And he enters her and she feels pain. And her mind reels with the sinful act she is committing. Her mind wanders to Daddy's hands touching her strange places and for a moment she forgets Roger-the-mechanic and his sweat and beer smells.

Two months later and she's married to Roger-the-mechanic and his hands are still touching her in those strange places. Oddly though, Daddy's hands don't touch her anymore. Daddy's hands are busy being sick in the hospital bed with no visitors to touch or be touched by them.

Seven months later and Sherryl has a son and she knows what happiness is. Daddy's hands are dead and she names her newborn son after them. Such a lovely child for such a strange mother.

Over the years she will be proud of him, watching him grow up, following his strange mother to church every Sunday. He will read her Bible every day as well. Such a good boy he will become. Parading around with his "God Hates Fags" signs, ridding the community of the unwanted, unlawful people.

"2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judges: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same thing."

But she's forty-two again and her Bible is in her hands. The cover worn into the shape of her aging hands, the verses worn into the shape of her aging eyes.

She places the Bible in its sacred place upon her nightstand and kneels beside her bed and talks into the silence to her God. As she prays, she can smell the sweat and beer smell of Roger-the-mechanic enter the room. She can feel his hands begin touching her in those strange places that Daddy's hands still touch her inside her mind. For a moment, she's twelve again and Daddy's hands are touching her in those very strange places. Sherryl prays harder to her God and smiles.



The Gallery
by Tanya Bertrand

Stroll into the gallery with me.
I'll show you my collection . . .

Scenes in black and blue.
I'll show you my collection
of watercolor tearscapes.

My heart and soul -
your canvas.

One stroke
a sweet caress.

One stroke
a scene of death.

Stroll into the gallery with me.
Come in and see my etchings . . .

lines carved deep.
Come in and see my etchings.

In scarred flesh-tones

I keep heavy-handed scrapes against
the grain.

One thrust
a sweet caress.

One thrust
a little death.

Come, stroll into the gallery with me.

Come in and see your artwork . . .
anger was your palette.

Come in and see your artwork
immortalized within me.

Take a look at what you had to say.
This was your means of self-expression -

One stroke
a sweet caress.

One blow
a little death.

You didn't have to hate
to love me.

You didn't have to love
to hate me.

But,
I didn't have to stay.



Penny Holmes

STEVEN

by Sean Eric McGill
Third Place Fall Fiction Winner

It had been days since Grace slept. It wasn't because she didn't want to, it was just that every time she came close, right as the darkness seemed to be closing over her, her thoughts turned to the basement.

And to Steven.

Steven was in the basement, she knew that because she had put him there. He had been bad, and she had put him in the basement as punishment. He had been warned not to read those magazines and watch those movies where young women, with their bodies naked for all the world to see, writhed around and did those awful, dirty things to men (and worse, sometimes to other women). But he kept doing it anyway, so she put him in the basement.

Grace could still be considered young in years, but time had not been kind, causing her to look much older than she really was. She had always been large for her age, and working in the local emergency room only added to her bulk. Steven, on the other hand, was a tiny man, resulting in many tasteless jokes about the two from family and friends, of which they had few. He had a cushy desk job at an office full of middle-aged men worrying about their hairlines and bottom lines.

She had planned to put Steven in the basement with a box of his magazines and leave him there until he swore never to read them again, or watch those movies (she had stopped just short of bringing the television and VCR down there as well). Things had gone rather well, until Steven refused to go into the basement, and Grace had to push him down the stairs. He fell head first, and when she heard a sharp crack, she was certain he was dead.

Nevertheless, she'd locked the door anyway, hoping that if he was alive, then perhaps he would be cured of his own specific perversion by the time he got out. Her plan was to make him "overdose," much like the parent who forces their child to smoke the entire pack of cigarettes they found in his gym bag.

It had certainly worked with her when her mother had caught her doing that "nasty thing" to herself in her bedroom, then forced her to do it in front of her until she no longer wanted to anymore.

Mother said it was wrong.

The church said it was wrong.

And that was that.

Night came and went, and when she had not heard Steven banging on the door and yelling those dirty words at her (Mother said that was wrong, too), she was almost certain he was dead, but still wouldn't open the door. Just in case.

She spent her time watching television and eating, deciding not to go to work. After awhile, she quit going around the basement door because of the smell that started to slowly become more and more noticeable in that part of the house. A few days later, the smell had begun to drift into the kitchen, forcing her to make fewer trips there, as well.

When the smell finally drifted into the living room, she summoned up enough courage to go into the kitchen and gather up enough food to keep her fed until the smell went away. Then, with food in tow, she went in to her bedroom and got into the bed.

The food was gone four days ago, and Grace left the bed only to relieve herself and get water from the bathroom, both of which she had ceased to do the day before, when she stopped leaving the bed altogether.

Now she lay in the same bed where she had consummated her marriage years before (and thank goodness that had stopped, she thought), but unable to sleep. Every time she tried, she kept seeing Steven in the basement. She began to notice the smell that had begun to make its way into her bedroom, despite the towels she had rolled up and shoved under the door. She thought a couple of times about killing herself, but she knew she couldn't.

Mother said it was wrong.

The church said it was wrong.

And that was that.

The Night my Mom met Satan

by Julie Tisdale



The dream clinging to her skin
she awoke and tried to shake it- in vain
 the black shadow of a demon
creeping under the crack of her door
 creeping along the floor
 condensing itself
 on the bed
to stroke her clammy breasts
 thighs
 she lay paralyzed in fear
slowly changing to pleasure
 not moving
 eyes tightly closed
feeling the misty fingers
cringing shamefully at her enjoyment
 waking up in a cold sweat
 the shadow creeping
 out the window
 and her
 trying to follow
its disappearing trail

1995
1995

The Quiet One

by Christine Floyd

He never had much to say. As a matter of fact, he never had anything to say. He just sat there.

In the small town of Veddington, Mississippi, everyone knew everyone. But no one knew William Benton. No one talked to William Benton—William Benton talked to no one. They just talked about him. Seems since he didn't talk, everyone just knew there was something wrong with him. (Everybody talked about people they didn't know.) It had always been that way, and there was no reason why it should change that evening of December 20, 1987.

It was dark in Stella's lounge that evening, but it was always dark in there. People always said it was so you couldn't see how fast everyone aged, but I knew it was because Ms. Stella couldn't afford fluorescent lights. So it was on this dark evening, in Ms. Stella's, in the middle of December, that I went in for my usual beer.

William Benton was sitting on his usual stool in the corner by the jukebox. He was fingering his glass of Charter and 7 (that's the only thing William ever drank). I glanced down at my watch. It was precisely 4:30. William Benton must have just arrived, because he always got there at 4:15, and he always left at 6:00. I walked on in and found my favorite stool, the one three seats down from William Benton's, and right to the left of Junior's.

"Hey, sweet thang," Junior yelled obnoxiously, his hoarse voice making a crackling noise that always sounded like he needed a good cough. "I want a damn beer!"

"Yeh, yeh, and I want a new ass," Sandy yelled back, slapping her big sagging butt with her right palm. "I ain't ya damn slave, Junior, what do ya want!" She opened the beer cooler, smacking her gum loudly as she reached in to get Junior his Schlitz. Sandy always smacked her gum and Junior always drank Schlitz.

I ordered my usual Miller Lite. It had been a long day at the paper mill, and all I wanted was a cold one.

I had just popped the top on my beer, when out of the corner of my eye, I noticed that William Benton was gone from his stool. That was odd. William Benton never left his stool. I looked at my watch, but it was only 4:45.

I looked back at Junior, his full, dirty beard shaking every time he laughed his obnoxious laugh. Then I looked over Junior's shoulder to the next barstool. There was Cal, the local postman, looking sloshed as usual. Cal was always getting drunk, and townsfolk could not remember a week the mail did not have to be redelivered. Cal always carried a flask at work, and he mixed up people's mail when he was drunk.

I looked to my left once more, to the stool where William Benton always sat—no one else had noticed he was gone. That's when I heard him call my name. "Chester," William Benton hollered, looking at me all the while with a rather stoic expression. "Would you do me a favor, and write your full name on a napkin?"

It was as if the voice of God had spoken. No one moved, everyone's astonished eyes on the talking William Benton.

"Sweet Sandy, would you please hand Chester a napkin," William Benton repeated.

Sandy cautiously looked at William Benton, then at me, and slowly reached over the bar to hand me a napkin.

I cannot explain why my hand shook uncontrollably as I wrote "Chester Granger" on the damp bar napkin; but when I walked over to William Benton and slowly raised the napkin to his hand, I was certain

I saw him smile. William Benton never smiled. I started shaking again.

William Benton died that night. He just went home and died.

Five days later, as I sat in the cool darkness of Mr. Aubrey's office, December 20th seemed like an eternity ago. This was the office of William Benton's attorney. I didn't know why I was there, only that I, along with the other barmongers, Sandy, Junior, and Cal, were all invited to attend the reading of a will—William Benton's will.

We all sat there, Sandy and Junior looking smug, Cal looking bored, and myself, well, I was just wary of what was to come. So when Mr. Aubrey cleared his throat to begin to speak, I started shaking again, like that night of the 20th.

Mr. Aubrey adjusted his glasses, then looked across his desk at the four of us. "It seems William Benton didn't have a family," he began, "and as trustee of his estate, I have asked you here today for the reading of his will. Each one of you is included." He cleared his throat again, then he began.

"To you, Sandy, if you will be so kind as to quit smacking your gum, I will begin."

Sandy stopped chewing and blushed, shocked by the dead man's perception.

"I will one month of free sessions to Nutri Loss. No more talk about your ass. If you had ever cared about yourself, you wouldn't have doubts about your appearance anyway. Sandy, you are a pain to the eyes, so may you live the rest of your life in fitness and prosperity."

Sandy crossed her legs, like a lady, and sat back quietly. Mr. Aubrey began again.

"Junior, you are a disgrace to society. Did you actually think I was going to leave you a penny?"

Junior stroked his beard and lowered his eyes guiltily.

"Well, I am. One penny per day, payable to you at the end of every month. This allowance, though small, is in commemoration of every rude comment you have unleashed upon our ears; may you always know your thoughts are worth something."

Junior took a deep breath, then crossed his hands in his lap. I had never seen him look so humble. Cal by this time was blatantly nervous. He was wrenching his hands, waiting for the inevitable.

"Cal, I want you to know that you are the sorriest excuse of a mailman."

Cal began thumping imaginary particles from his pant legs.

"So I've decided to make things easier. I've had a new post office built that will be open for service as of tomorrow. Cal, as of tomorrow, you have no job. I have personally seen to that. People can finally rest assured that their checks are in the mail. However, you have at your disposal, at any

store in town, unlimited credit for a lifetime supply of alcohol. May your life of inebriation be as enjoyable to you now as it has seemed to be."

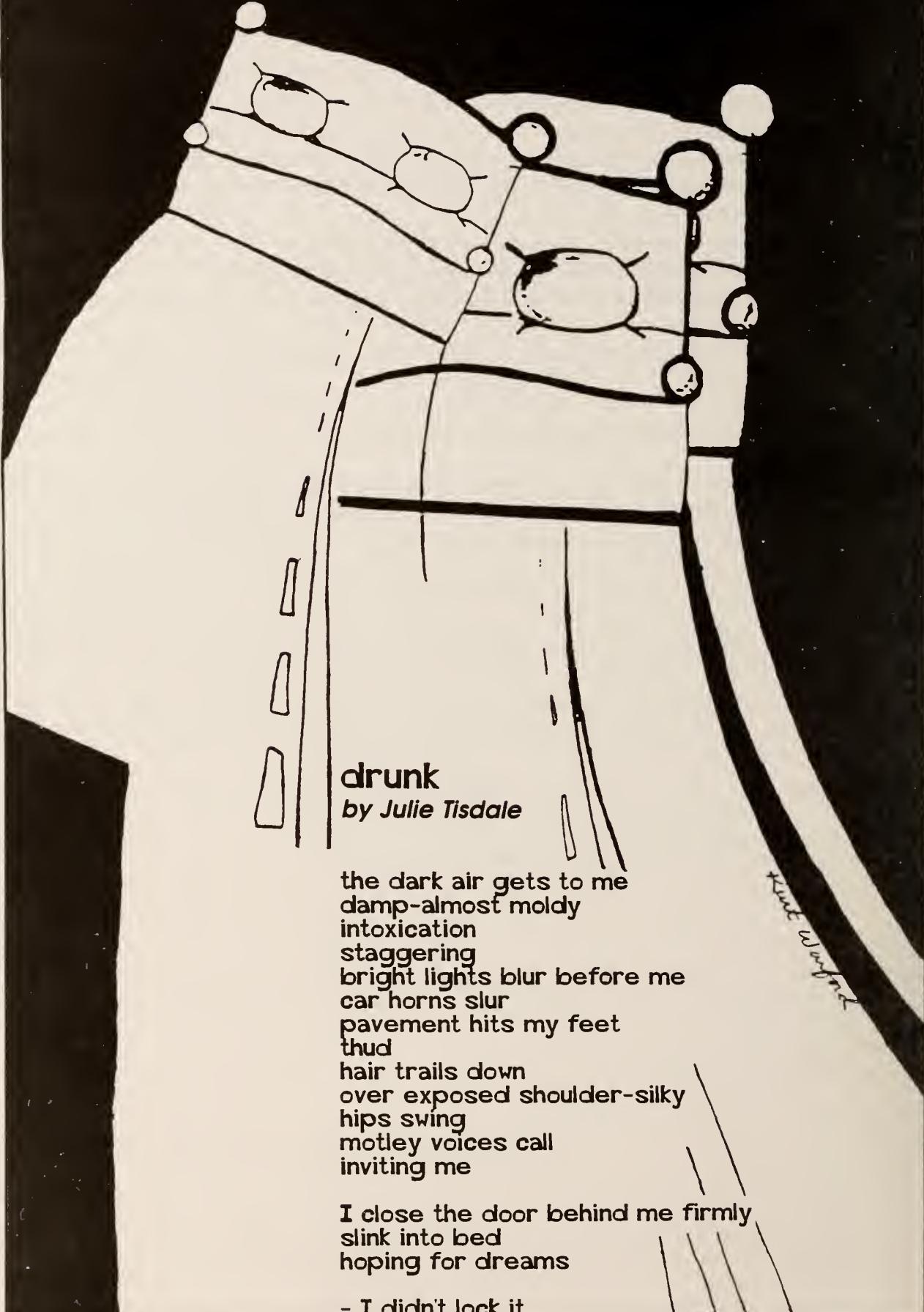
Cal's jaw dropped, but the resignation on his face told all. He had been pegged, and he knew it. He pulled his flask form inside his postman's jacket and took a long, healthy pull.

A million thoughts raced through my head. My pulse rocketed, and I thought for a moment, when I broke out into a cold sweat, that I was actually going to faint. Me, a healthy, normally calm grown man, about to faint—until I heard the next words.

"Finally, to Chester Granger, a mirror image of myself. We are both creatures of habit. You know me like no one else. But unlike me, you have a tolerance for others that I was never able to achieve. You are particular in your observations. You notice that I enter Stella's at 4:15, and I always leave at 6:30. I myself have taken particular notice of your observance. Calm down, take a deep breath, and I will continue."

My eyes darted to Mr. Aubrey. I wondered how William Benton could have known what I would be thinking, feeling—Mr. Aubrey assured me he was reading straight from the will. I closed my eyes and willed my heart to slow its pace, then looked back to Mr. Aubrey. He continued reading.

"To you, Chester, I will my life, boring as it must have seemed to you. But I want you to LIVE it like I never did. My stock in Nutri Loss, and my estate in Kentucky are yours, under these stipulations. You must sell these assets—valued at over 4 million—and leave this town, Chester. I want you to live out my fantasies. Mr. Aubrey has an itinerary for your destinations and activities, which covers a period of 34 years, by which time you will be able to comfortably settle down with the remaining money, anywhere you desire. This is your chance to do the things I'VE always wanted to do. My money and my blessings to you—a creature of habit no more."



drunk
by Julie Tisdale

the dark air gets to me
damp-almost moldy
intoxication
staggering
bright lights blur before me
car horns slur
pavement hits my feet
thud
hair trails down
over exposed shoulder-silky
hips swing
motley voices call
inviting me

I close the door behind me firmly
slink into bed
hoping for dreams

- I didn't lock it



NIGHT

by Angelica Kraushaar

Shadows of darker black mark the leaves of trees near a path
while the Moon smiles her gentle light on her sister Earth
Tendrils of grey fog twine through the tall and waving grass
and the Earth smiles . . .

Circle dancers look to the heavens and chant their prayers
while thanking the Earth and Moon and Sun for giving life
Wondrous feats of power fill the moonlit and populous night
and the Goddess smiles . . .

History Lesson

☞ A parody of the Jabberwocky ☝
by M.R. Simmons

'Twas evening and the darkest shades
Of night drew near to mortal men
All lamplit were the avenues
With scholars in their dens.

Beware the scholar's test, my son
The misty date, the slippery act;
Beware the unreported case
And shun the frumious unproved fact.

He took his pen and book in hand
Longtime the unproved fact he sought
So rested he 'neath the library
And stood a while in thought.

And as in pensive thought he stood
The unproved fact with ragged clothes
Approached him with a baleful glare
And gargled on his nose.

One, two; one, two; and through and
through
The mighty man with deadly jerk
Impaled the fact upon his pen
And stayed he with his work.

"And hast thou slain the unproved fact?
Come to arms, my studious boy!
Oh lovely day, Hoo Hoo Ha Hay"
He flaunted in his joy.

'Twas evening and the darkest shades
Of night drew near to mortal men
All lamplit were the avenues
With scholars in their dens.



Freire's Fight for Human Consciousness

by Amanda Lord

First Place Fall Nonfiction Winner

Many teachers consider a successful classroom one in which students sit quietly and complete their handouts promptly. Few teachers consider how education affects a student's life on a larger spectrum. Paulo Freire saw how education could drastically change a student's condition. He also saw how education could encompass all aspects of a student's life, even down to his or her own personal freedom. As a result of helping to reform Brazilian educational systems, Paulo Freire developed a pedagogy that addresses the complex relationships among transformation, dialogue, love, and questioning.

Freire dedicated his life to improving education. In the early 1960's, Freire served as coordinator of the National Literacy Program in Brazil and firmly rejected the idea of using prepackaged materials in literacy education. At this point, Freire began to develop his own system of teaching literacy, different from traditional systems (Butkus 574). Freire's work to increase literacy in Brazil continues into this decade. From 1989 to 1992, Freire served as secretary of education in Sao Paulo, Brazil (Torres 181). During his tenure as secretary of education, Freire initiated many changes in the Brazilian educational system:

drastic changes in municipal education, including a comprehensive curriculum reform for grades K-8; new models of school management through implementation of school councils that included teachers, principals, parents, and government officials; and the launching of a movement for Literacy training (MOVA—Sao Paulo) built on participatory planning and delivery, with support from nongovernmental organizations and social movements. (Torres 184)

By the end of Freire's tenure as secretary of education, many facets of the educational system improved. These improvements show a rise in student retention rate from 79.46% in 1989 to 81.3% in 1990 to 87.7% in 1991 and also an increase in teacher salaries (Torres 206-207). Freire chose to retire in 1991 so he could lecture and write (Torres 184). For the past three decades, Paulo Freire has worked to improve the educational system in Brazil.

Freire's reforms in Brazil resulted from his dissatisfaction with the traditional educational practices. Much of Freire's work strives to transform these traditional systems. Freire calls this despised, traditional system "banking education." In banking education, "education becomes an act of depositing, in which students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed 58). In classrooms where teachers employ banking education, students sit idly while the teacher simply feeds them information. Freire condemns banking education because it ignores the student's ability to think critically:

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept that role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them. (Freire Pedagogy 60).

As Freire worked with many Brazilians oppressed by their government, Freire saw how the educational system in the country further oppressed the people. If teachers refuse to give students the opportunity to think critically about themselves and their world, then those students continue to think passively about the world that oppresses them, and they lack the desire to change.

At this time, Freire began to consider how education could help free Brazilians from their oppression. Freire claims that all men, oppressed and oppressor, should liberate themselves from this cycle. Freire admits liberation requires much work. He believes that "[l]iberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful

one. The man who emerges is a new man, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all men" (*Freire Pedagogy* 33). Liberation involves a transformation not of the oppressed to oppressor, but of oppressed and oppressor to a more humanized and free person.

This transformation requires dialogue between people, both oppressed and oppressor. Dialogue exists when "competing representations of reality dynamically challenge each other to compose alternative forms of action" (Knoblauch 125). Dialogue helps to shape critical consciousness by revealing "competing forms of reality." Critical thinking and dialogue cannot exist alone, and so liberation requires both. Freire defines critical thinking as "thinking which discerns as indivisible solidarity between them" (*Freire Pedagogy* 81). Critical thinking addresses the world's effects on man and how the two change with one another. Freire incorporates his view of critical thinking in his definition that dialogue is "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (*Freire Pedagogy* 76). People who think critically, who engage in dialogues, see the world as constantly changing and realize their abilities to name that world. Through the ability to name the world, people see how to escape the world that oppresses them.

In addition to critical thinking, dialogue must have a loving and accepting atmosphere. Foremost, Freire claims that without love, dialogue cannot exist. Dialogue is the forerunner to liberation and "no matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation" (*Freire Pedagogy*). Without a love for liberation, dialogue lacks a cause to exist. Freire also believes that dialogue requires humility because recreating the world "cannot be an act of arrogance" (*Freire Pedagogy* 78). If a person renames or recreates the world out of selfish motivations, then that person acts as an oppressor in suppressing another's views, and liberation cannot occur with any oppressive forces. Dialogue also requires faith. Dialogue requires "faith in man, faith in his power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in his provocation to be more fully human" (*Freire Pedagogy* 79). If people do not have faith that things can change and change through them, then dialogue cannot and will not exist. In addition to faith, people must have hope, but "hope, however, does not consist in crossing one's arms and waiting" (*Freire Pedagogy* 80). As long as people fight for liberation they show hope, and with hope they can sustain the wait for their dream of liberation. Without any one of these qualities, people cannot have dialogue and cannot have liberation. Only in a loving and accepting environment will people engage in dialogue and consequently in liberation.

In addition to a dialogue based on love, humility, faith, and hope, the dialogue must contain two dimensions, reflection and action. Both of these components must be present in "the essence of dialogue itself: the word" (*Freire Dialogue of the Oppressed* 75). Freire names this simultaneous combination of reflection and action *praxis*. Freire defines praxis as "the two dimensions of authentic discourse, that of reflection and that of action, the process of naming reality and the process of changing reality" (Knoblauch 125). Words lacking either reflection or action can neither name nor change reality. Freire believes that revolution or liberation requires this praxis, a balance of reflection and action, in words.

Within the curiosity that results from critical thinking and dialogue, questions will inevitably develop. Freire bases his pedagogy on question or problem-posing education instead of the more traditional banking education. He believes this process benefits both the teacher and the student:

The problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the teacher-student: he is not 'cognitive' at one point and 'narrative' at another. He is always 'cognitive,' whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with students. . . . In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. (*Freire Pedagogy* 68)

The problem-posing method allows students to contribute with the teacher, thus allowing the students to create their own views of the world. Through this method, Freire saw how people oppressed under Brazilian government might begin to think critically in order to help liberate themselves. Freire believes that through education and questioning, people can learn to liberate themselves from all oppressors.

Within Freire's problem-posing method, he addresses the issue of voice and silence. A tension exists between silence and voice because "human existence cannot be understood outside the category of tension" (*Freire Toward a Pedagogy* 15). Freire claims that critical thinking can occur silently or aloud, and teachers should be aware of this difference and not force students to talk just because they think it represents

critical thinking. Teachers should challenge students “to overcome their criticism and to find the courage to say things, but not just for the sake of saying anything” (Freire Toward 16). Freire warns that often when students ask questions, it is “an attempt to impress ourselves and others that we have a voice” (Freire Toward 16). Teachers and students both should try to understand and accept the difference between critical silence and critical voice.

Freire’s ideas about voice and silence have many applications in today’s classroom. When teachers ask questions, they often become anxious if silence drags on too long. Freire might respond that this silence is good, that students may be thinking critically, and that teachers should not rush the students or become discouraged with the lesson. Also, when teachers initiate discussions, they should be aware of conversation void of meaning. Teachers should always strive for dialogue, conversation filled with both reflection and action.

Although Freire’s theories seem geared for revolutionary school systems with children oppressed by the weight of the world, educators can implement these theories in the majority of school systems. Freire admits:

We have to know that we are not in school to transform the world. This is not the task for the schools. But we are in school at least to challenge our students to think differently, that is, go beyond a certain kind of mental bureaucratization, which is terrible. It immobilizes history, inactivity, and so on. By our only going through the motions without realizing it, we lose the relationship between tactics and strategy, the ways we create to realize our dreams. (Freire Toward 14)

Even though educators can apply Freire’s theories to heavily oppressed educational systems, educators can also apply these same theories in all schools as a source of motivation to students. The liberation Freire refers to applies more than to a liberation from burdensome government, but rather to a total liberation of the mind. Freire tries to teach students how to think critically about their world, how to change it if they want, and how, through critical thinking, to realize their dreams. Therefore, to Freire, education is a realization of consciousness.

Teachers can implement Freire’s ideas by turning away from traditional banking educations, strict lecture and ditto sheets with no critical feedback from students, and turning towards a problem-posing education. A problem-posing education in today’s schools would include more meaningful discussions and activities that promote critical, conscious thinking. In a time when many of today’s students feel unable to escape their desperate situations Freire’s educational methods of critical consciousness and love seem just the answer for today’s schools.

Freire demonstrates the genius behind his educational views by the wide applicability of his principles. Freire believes critical consciousness results from dialogues with others in a loving environment. The way to liberation and enlightenment relies on this idea of critical consciousness. Educators can teach critical thinking through a problem-posing method. Whether students aim to overcome illiteracy or to understand modern rhetorical theory, Freire believes all students and all people can accomplish their goals through a critical awakening of the world about them.

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Indirect Exposition

by Julie Tisdale

Barbra stares at the television for a few minutes until she can stand it no more. "Karen, this movie really sucks!" she finally exclaims.

"Oh, come on, the best sex scene is only five minutes away," Karen replies, totally enthralled in the TV.

Barbra slumps back in the couch and lets her eyes drift from the television. They land on Karen. She lets them drift from Karen's long, straight black hair to her white neck, down her curved breasts to finally linger on her delicate ankles. Barbra lets out a huge sigh.

"What's your problem," Karen says, finally tearing her eyes from the scene of naked bodies before her, "do I have a bug on me or something?" she continues, searching her feet for anything out of the ordinary.

"Um. . . . No, I was just, um, thinking." Barbra replies nervously.

"Oh my god! It's a miracle. She's thinking!" Karen laughs and continues, "Listen, I know you hate this movie, so why don't we forget about the rest of it and go get some food. The best part is over anyway."

"Sounds good to me; let's make like a tree and leave!" agrees Barbra, jumping off the couch and pulling Karen with her.

"What the hell was that? Make like a tree and leave? You've been watching too much TV," Karen chortles.

"Hey, don't tease me, you big slimy booger," Barbra throws back.

"Make like a tree and leave! Make like a tree and leave! Make like a tree and leave!" Karen taunts.

"I warned you." Barbra says ominously. She tackles Karen and they both land on the floor. Barbra straddles Karen and tickles her until she screams in laughter and begs Barbra to stop. Finally, Barbra does stop and just sits looking down on Karen as she gasps for breath. "You know, Karen," Barbra begins hesitantly, "you're really pretty."

"Yeah, and my ass is green, too," laughs Karen, pushing Barbra off and sitting up.

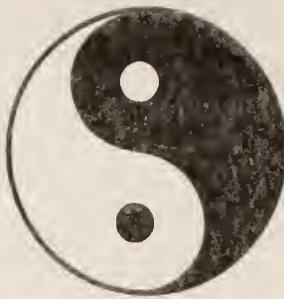
"No, I mean I think you're pretty," Barbra says, edging closer to Karen.

"Well, I think you've been smoking something," Karen replies jokingly. "Now, come on, my little pomegranate, let's get going. I'm starving." Karen rises and grabs her jacket.

"Okay, okay," say Barbra resignedly, "let's go."



B-Boys - Shelly Davis
Second Place Fall Art Winner



Contrary States of Being in Selected Poems from Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience

by Randy Price
Second Place Spring Nonfiction Winner

This world is filled with apparent opposites—conflicting ideas that seem to eternally pursue each other, just as the yin chases the yang in the Tao. The concept of conflict is an old idea that has intrigued authors, poets, and psychologists for years, and is a topic of immense fascination to me. What I find more interesting, however, is the way one half of a conflicting idea is paradoxically necessary for the other. It is difficult to imagine good without evil, for one presupposes the other. The very definition of the word “good” becomes ambiguous if we cannot name what is *not* “good”—that is, what is evil. The same situation arises when we attempt to examine the words “innocence” and “experience” without taking into account each word’s antonym. Innocence is the lack of experience, while experience is the loss of innocence. Yet, these impromptu definitions are somewhat lacking in the true scope of each word; for (and I think Blake would agree) there is an abstract midpoint between innocence and experience in which we can glean the benefits of both states of being at once (Wilson 29). Learning to reach this midpoint—this higher innocence—is what Blake wishes for us while reading his Songs of Innocence and of Experience. Of the numerous poems in Songs of Innocence and of Experience, this paper will focus on the two “Introduction” poems, the two “Nurse’s Song” poems, “The Lamb,” and “The Tyger.” When looking at these poems, we find striking similarities and differences between each song on Innocence and its experiential antithesis—reminding us that, according to Blake, life is not merely a collection of black and white, night and day, good and evil, but rather is a continuum filled with many necessary gray areas.

In the opening stanza of the introductory poem of Songs of Innocence, we find two prevalent voices: the Piper (the narrator) and the child. The Piper is merrily piping “down the valleys wild” (1) and encounters a child sitting on a cloud who requests the Piper to “Pipe a song about a Lamb” (5). Metaphorically speaking, the child is “the poet in each of us; the part of us that responds to vision” (Frankenburg 65). Stanzas two through four directly allude to

An interesting Biblical passage, Luke 7:31-35: “To what then shall I liken the men to this generation? And what are they like? They are like children sitting in the market place, calling to one another and saying, ‘We have piped for you, and you have not danced; we have sung dirges and you have not wept.’ . . . The antithesis between “men of this generation” who do not dance or weep to the pipe and the song (that is, who are spiritually bankrupt) and the children who do dance and sing is remarkably close to the contrast between Blake’s states of innocence and experience. (Gleckner 84)

Words which betoken the state of innocence in the introduction include: "wild," "pleasant," "merry," "happy," and full of "joy." The generous use of such words brings a feeling of sanctuary to the reader—a feeling that most of us fondly remember when our thoughts stray to our childhood days of bliss. However, if we look closely at the sequence of these words, we notice that they "not only characterize this state but suggest a progression of states through which the soul of the 'infant joy' must pass to attain a higher innocence" (Gleckner 85). By "higher innocence," I am referring to a state of being in which we achieve a spiritual sense of balance between innocence and experience—a self-actualization, if you will.

The child on the cloud is a symbol of happy innocence, while the Lamb (which is first mentioned in line five) is obviously symbolic of Christ; however, "the image of the Lamb is controlled by the introductory image of the laughing child and so stands as a symbol of the Christ Child rather than of the Crucified Christ" (Giovannini 5). Thus, the Lamb is associated with a type of joyful hope to the world (i.e. in the baby Jesus), rather than the melancholy and tragic image that is brought to mind when we contemplate the graphic death of Jesus. In other words, in this poem Blake encourages us to attain a happy and hopeful picture of the living Christ, an innocent image, instead of the sorrowful picture of the dead Christ, an "experienced" image (Giovannini 5). Also of note in this poem is the way the child asks the Piper to "pipe" the song (5), then to sing the song (10), and finally to write the song "In a book that all may read" (14). Notice how the child "wept to hear" (8) the Piper pipe the song, while the child "wept with joy to hear" (12) the Piper when he sings the song. It seems that the Piper's song is made more joyful when he actively uses his own voice to tell his tale, rather than by passively allowing another instrument (i.e., the pipe) to convey the song. In this, the Piper is more passionate (and honest) in rendering the song. After all, "the pipe has its place, but the severe limitations of that place must be admitted and the pipe discarded sometime. Only the divine human is eternal" (Gleckner 88). The divine human form (or the divine image) is the only medium that can adequately capture the beauty of innocence and experience, which will enable a fortunate few of us to attain higher innocence (i.e., vision). The verbal song seems to be the most passionate way that the Piper can spread his insightful tales, but he can only reach a very limited audience in this manner. Hence, the child asks the Piper to ultimately sit down and write his songs in a book, so that everyone may hear his enlightening stories.

The wandering Piper later matures into the prophetic Bard in the introduction to Songs of Experience. In this poem we find the former Piper much changed from his blissful days of old. Here, he demands—almost arrogantly—instantaneous attention.

The child who listened to the Songs of Experience had now become the earth, the world of men, the reader, who must hear the Songs of Experience whether they like it or not. Yet the charge of arrogance must not be made too quickly, for the Bard's imperative "Hear" is justified almost immediately. The situation no longer depends upon proper response to happy songs and sad songs; now the ultimate fact of reality has been thrust before our eyes, the nadir of life of which we all (the earth) are part. The songs to come are not only for our edification but for our salvation. (Gleckner 213-232)

I found "Introduction to Experience" very difficult to understand upon my first reading of it. However what is taking place in the poem becomes clearer upon realizing that, similar to the "Introduction to Innocence," there is an exchange of two different voices: the voice of the Bard and the voice of the Holy Word (Gleckner 232). However, "since the Bard, unlike the Piper, already knows of 'Present, Past, & Future' when the poem begins, the Word is less inspiration (i.e., as in the Holy Word's inspiration in 'Introduction to Innocence' via the song about the Lamb), which is unnecessary to the Bard, than simple stimulus (Gleckner 233). Also, we see how God (the Holy Word) searches the garden of Eden (5) in the poem, looking for Adam and Eve who are, at this point, considered lapsed souls of experience for having eaten the forbidden fruit of knowledge (Genesis 3:8-9). Here, Blake

has juxtaposed the picture of God in the cool of this day calling to the benighted lapsed souls of experience who are his children, and he makes those souls the lapsed soul, Earth. By so doing he emphasizes the patent fact that God did not come to the garden to succor the lost soul (as he does the Bard) but to curse it and cast it out. With this in mind a new glaring light is thrown on the second stanza. The Holy Word weeps, but without pity or sympathy, and thus identifies itself with the hypocrite, Blake's archfiend. The selfishness inherent in such crocodile tears reflects the fact that the violation of Jehovah's law only means to him that his perfectly regulated jealously guarded universe has been spoiled. . . . Capable of divine wisdom and understanding, Jehovah has chosen to abide by the insen-sate iron of his law and punishment, and thus to deny the very end which he hopes to regain, unity of creation. (Gleckner 233, 234)

It is at this point in Songs of Innocence and Experience that Blake implies that the God of the Old Testament is different from that of the New Testament. The God of the Old Testament is a harsh, selfish, and joyless god who cares little for his created children, while the God of the New Testament is a selfless, joyous, and merciful god who listens when his children need him.

In contrast to the Holy Word's "teachings" (preaching?), "the Bard's teaching is simple. In the past there was innocence, from which the soul in its selfhood was precipitated into experience by the encroachment of the law and its punishment. But the punishment is not eternal: another day is yet to come, just as the morning always follows the night. To achieve it, one has but to see it" (Gleckner 235). This hopeful message is echoed in the "Nurse's Song (Innocence)."

The young nurse in the "Nurse's Song (Innocence)" is completely at peace with herself and her world. She is content in her duties as guardian and playmate of the children. And, although she initially requests that the children come in for the night, she reminds them that it will be day again tomorrow, and they may play again then:

"Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come leave off this play, let us away
Till the morning appear in the skies." (5-9)

At this stage in the Nurse's life, she is very kind, open-minded to the children's desires, and is willing to occasionally bend her authority over them (10-16). The Nurse later undergoes a dramatic "conversion" as she allows her years of experience to harden her heart, change her optimism to pessimism, and cause her once open mind to seal shut in bitter paranoia.

Whereas the nurse of the earlier poem was a variant of the protective mother, . . . the nurse in the later poem observes the echoing green with somewhat more than a solicitous eye. The voices are still heard, it is true, but in addition she knows, or think she knows, that "whisperings are in the dale." Though the children in the first line seem to be innocents, in the second line the nurse sees them as secretive, close-lipped. . . . The nurse, in terms of her memory, now corrupted, interprets as something hidden in the innocence we have seen to be joyous, unrestrained, and completely guileless. The whisperings are not heard because they are not there: but in the nurse's mind they must be there. Her experience tells her so. Complete freedom and lack of inhibition are inconceivable to her. Happiness is a thing stolen and hidden away, and crushed into nonexistence; laughing in experience is not heard on the hill in the face of the bright day, but there are snickers in the covertness of the dale. (Gleckner 266)

Instead of remembering how innocence can heal the wounds that experience has inflicted, the nurse opts to

forever forget her past “foolish” happiness. In innocence, “her heart” was “at rest” because “she was happy in performing her divine function, protecting and caring for the innocent children” (Gleckner 267). Yet, she never learned the lesson of experience; and so, abandoned all former innocence and embraced the icy arms of her bitter experience—making her totally bitter and miserable in the process.

The fifth poem of Blake’s Songs of Innocence and of Experience that I will discuss is “The Lamb.” Of all the Songs of Innocence, I think that this poem is the most innocent and childlike. From the first line we hear the gentle curiosity of a young voice sincerely ask a lamb, “Dost thou know who made thee?” (2). Elements of repetition in parts of the poem strengthen the childlike imagery conjured up by this cozy little poem. This repetition occurs in couplets in lines one and two, nine and ten, eleven and twelve, and nineteen and twenty. Carefully selected adjectives such as “delight” and “bright” (5-6) create images of daylight, while the brutal power of the Lamb’s experiential antithesis, “The Tyger,” is conveyed by dark and foreboding images of night (Pottle 39).

In “The Tyger,” Blake presents to us the eternal problem of evil (Drew 160). Many faithful Christians (and other religions, no doubt) have pondered why God would allow evil to exist. Of course, it boggles the mind even more to contemplate that God actually *created* evil. Blake purposefully leaves this last query unanswered by the poem’s suggestive question, “Did he who make the Lamb make thee?” (20). By posing such a question, Blake highlights the notion that God can and did create evil. But why, we wonder, would a good and just god do such a thing? Simply because evil is a necessary part of good. For, as I mentioned earlier, we cannot fully appreciate the happiest (and best) moments in our lives if we have no conception of an opposite to compare them to. In this way, the negative things such as sorrow and evil enhance the positive things by their very presence—they delineate one another, so to speak.

Paradoxically, the tiger’s creation is at once an act of mercy and of menace. Both are divine, just as heaven and hell are divine. Man himself, of himself, must deny himself—and the efficacy of the tiger’s terror—and by means of the tiger’s energy, wrath, and imaginative thought dispel the night’s darkness [through its fire]. The consequent immortal day, expansive, unrestrained, free, and vigorously healthy, will see the tiger . . . and the lamb lie down together, portions of eternity once again united in the all-embracing form divine. (Gleckner 277-278)

Through these contrary states, Blake is trying to show us the way vision (higher innocence) restores human identity. Blake is trying to explain the necessity of objective (open-minded) vision in “The Lamb” and the necessity of subjective (personal) insight in “The Tyger.” We need both the innocence of the Lamb and the experience of the Tyger if we are to survive and be happy in this world. The innocence of the Lamb gives us hope to overcome obstacles in our lives (so that we don’t give up), and the experience of the Tyger allows us to be just cynical enough so that we learn from our mistakes as we continue to grow. This is true for all of the Songs of Innocence and of Experience, and it is a lesson we should strive to learn if we want to achieve our full potential—the human form divine.

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A response to Keats'

"When I have fears that I may cease to be."

by Daniel Alan Hypes

Second Place Fall Poetry Winner

When I have fears that I may be too long,
when all the promise of my early work
doth spoil the entreaties of the rest
and factories of growed wheat lurk,
where finer grain had swelled the nest.
When glow of phosphorous latenight cable
replaces all the majesty of stars,
and the joyous craft that was my staple,
shall pass in Time as brilliant farce.
When I feel, genteel biographer,
that I might live to bloat my stomach
or owe my dryness to a diaper,
I bid Keats sigh, the hand that soothed
his eyelids—
had not the drool stained chin to dry.

Untitled

by Nathaniel O. Wood

I, like some reptilian creature, move out of the shade
and drink in the warm sunlight.

I feel warmth on the dark of my legs.

I grin and think of this simile.

I smile and remember the shade.

Almost satiated with sunmilk, I slowly turn and walk
towards the shade.

I watch the shadow of my head move closer
then meld with the darkness of the covered walkway.
I open the door and, then scaling the stairs, blink in
the cool and dark.

Penetrating the cavern, I try to think of warm-blooded
folly, but can only think of my fever—
the cause of my fall from mammalian grace.

How The Devil Got Pointed Ears by Billy Dunn

The devil wore a pompadour
You really couldn't tell
It drooped and slooped
And fell in his face
In the fiery pits of hell

So the devil bought some hair cream
Made of apples, grapes and figs
It stunk like gunk
And drew green flies
So he bought himself some wigs

When the devil wore the first wig
It reached high into the room
He got the feeling
It reached the ceiling
And sent it to its tomb

He thought that if he bought a hat
He could hide the hair he had
He threw it away
The very next day
When everyone else had the hat he had

His mother called, said he'd look good bald
So, he started to cut his hairs
He snipped and nipped
And tripped too much
And now he's got pointed ears

So if you decide
You are not satisfied
With the things which make you yourself
Change what you will
If better you'll feel

PORCUPINE SONG by Hanna Marie Crowley

**Porcupine
Up my Spine
I like to Sing in Rain
If you tell me
I won't do it
I will go insane!**

**Salamander
Speak in Slander
Constantly Confused
If you tell it
I won't laugh
I am not amused!**

**Alligator
Silly Baker
He cooks with a root
If you steal it
I won't touch it
I don't like your loot!**

**Platypus
Octopus
I know it's not rude
If you cook it
I won't eat it
I don't like mushy food.**

Two little men and a fish - Nathaniel D. Wood



The King of Bowls

by Christine Floyd

I Slam the lid down
to its appropriate resting place.
Why, Sir, must you Always forget?
And, why, Sir, is a Straight Aim
So Difficult?

I realize the King of Bowls
Rarely sits upon his throne
as much as I.
At least time has graced me
with larger hips--
I used to fall in!

I sit on the porcelain bowl and smile,
dreaming of a fantasy world with
No more water on the butt--
And
No more urine on the rim.

1985

How the Lord Blessed Amos and Dry-Hole

by John Doughty, Jr.
First Place Spring Fiction Winner

We operate mostly on credit out here in the country, so if you gonna keep your doors open you gotta know people. I've had mine open forty years. I know people. A while back, one of them Sullivans came in here, put his stuff on the counter, and said, "Pack-a-cheap smokes." I knowed what he was gonna say next and he said it: "Amos, reckon I could charge this until the first of next month?"

His dead daddy still owed me thirty-nine dollars and seventy-three cents, and if anybody thought old Amos was gonna charge a nickel to a Sullivan they had another thing coming. "Nope," I told him. "Ain't no way."

I rang up his beer, his bread, his smokes, and the pile of candy he'd bought for the bunch of sorry kids hanging out the busted windows of his hundred dollar car. Then I added fifty-nine cents for the honey-bun he'd stuck in his back pocket, forty-nine cents for the pack of gum in his front pocket, eighty-nine cents for the roll of paper towels I keep by the register on Tuesdays, and a dollar just because he was a thieving Sullivan. If there's one thing in this world I can't stand, it's a thief. "Nine dollars and a nickel," I said.

"That's mighty high," he said and handed me a ten.

"As a cat's back," I agreed and gave him seventy cents in change because he was a thieving Sullivan and sacked up everything but the Tuesday paper towels. "You welcome to take yore business someplace else."

He stuck his short-changed change in his pocket and went out the door with his mighty-high sack of stuff and didn't say nothing. There ain't no other place. They closed their doors when the oil bust hit. Thought thirty dollar oil was gonna last forever. Me, I knowed better. There's more oil under an acre of A-rabs than the whole state of Louisiana. All them A-rabs had to do was open them valves a little bit wider, just like I knowed they would.

I started this store out of the back of a truck with watermelons and cantaloupes me and Mable hauled out of Mexico all the way to this crossroads in Louisiana. It used to be on the main highway, but it ain't no more. I ain't no crook, but me and Mable—that's her over there on that stool watching the candy rack so no damn kids can steal—she's about blind but the kids don't know it—we'd pay them Mexicans a dollar for twenty watermelons and they'd throw the cantaloupes in for nothing. These people around here'd pay a dollar for one watermelon and a quarter for a cantaloupe.

But them watermelons over there by the wall and the chicken feed are five dollars now. If I can get a good cantaloupe, I got to sell it for a dollar. And half the time if I do get one, me and Mable have to eat it. People nowadays don't eat much of anything that ain't in a can or wrapped in paper. Me and Mable sell more beer in a day than we do watermelons and cantaloupes in a year. And Mexican beer costs more than American beer. Figure that out if you can. I can't.

But I can figure where to put my money. It's in hundred dollar bills wrapped up in paper sacks, ten thousand dollars to the sack. It shore ain't in no fancy canopy over my gas pumps so high-faluting women don't get their hair wet if it's raining. And it ain't in no plate glass windows so them damn kids can throw rocks and bust holes. And it ain't in no high-priced beer cooler. Them four old refrigerators work just fine. And air conditioning? Them screen doors work just fine. A good breeze don't cost nothing.

Yep, my money's in paper sacks. Got nineteen sacks of money back in the storage room mixed with forty years of tax receipts. I know people. Any of them Sullivans or anybody else busts in here at night, ain't nobody gonna steal tax receipts. Besides, me and Mable live in the back and I sleep light. Mable don't know it, but soon as I got a few more of them sacks, me and the sacks and a new woman are

headed for Mexico.

When them Sullivans drove off in a clanking-knocking cloud of black smoke, up drove a fine car and out stepped a Yankee. You can spot one a mile away because they'll have a good car, new clothes, and a gawking look on their faces. I used to be one myself. But I don't claim it because it's bad for business.

"Amos," Mable asked, squinting out the screen door at the Yankees, "who's that?"

"Tourists," I said real loud because Mable can't hear very good. "Probably driving around looking at oil wells."

The Yankee came in, followed by a Yankee gal with lipstick and blond hair and big shaking titties. "Oh, Charles," she said with a deep breath and a bounce, "isn't this a quaint little store."

"There's ants on the floor," Mable told me. "Get the bug-spray."

That Yankee's eyes rolled around the shelves and the walls and stopped on Mable like he ain't never seen an old woman squinting from a stool. "Yes, my dear," he told his gal, "it certainly is. I have never stepped into one more quaint."

"Hey!" Mable told him real loud. "Don't stomp no ants in my floor. You'll knock a hole in it."

He jumped back, gandered down at his shoes, then at the worn out floor, then up at Mable. She squinted and he stared. He finally looked at me.

"Howdy," I said. "You folks passing through?"

"Yes we are," he said, Yankee-fast. "We're on our way to New Orleans." He looked out the screen door toward the pump-jacks a-screeching and a-going up and down across the street. "The people around here must certainly be rich."

I knowed right off that he could talk a whole lot faster than he could think. "Some are," I told him. "Most ain't."

"Well," he said like he knowed what he was talking about, "there must certainly be an enormous amount of wealth in this area."

I wanted to tell him that a lot of the wealth in this area came from selling oil wells to Yankees. If he'd hang around long enough, somebody'd oblige him. He'd soon find out that his well'd only pump up to twenty dollars worth of oil every day and burn up twenty-five dollars of electricity doing it.

They walked around the shelves, looking over at Mable, him whispering to his gal about "ignorant red-necks" and both of them talking about the "interesting line of merchandise" and acting like they ain't never in their lives seen a jar of pickled pig's lips. I heard them say "conversation piece" and "cocktail party." After a while they came up to the counter and put down two belly washers, some cheese crackers, a pack of gum, and a jar of pig's lips. He wanted a pack of cowboy cigarettes. She wanted a pack of those skinny little things that liberated women don't do nothing but get lipstick on.

I rang it all up and added the Tuesday paper towels, a dollar because he was a Yankee and thought that I was dumb, and another dollar because I knowed I could get away with it. "Twelve dollars and thirteen cents," I said.

"My," he said, "that certainly is high."

"Yep," I said, "we can't buy volume like big city stores."

"Yes," he said with a knowing, Yankee nod, "I certainly understand that." His Yankee look turned even more superior. "I have a degree in Economic Theory from Harvard University."

"Is that right?" I said and tried to sound as impressed as I could. I handed him his change and didn't short-change him because I knowed I couldn't get away with it. While he counted it, I said, "I got an economic theory of my own."

"You do?" he said and grinned like I'd said something funny. "Would you mind sharing your theory?" He looked over at his gal and muttered out of the side of his mouth: "This certainly should be interesting."

"It's simple," I said. "If yore intake is exceeded by yore outgo, yore upkeep is gonna be yore

downfall."

The gal laughed, titties just a-shaking. He stood there with his jaw slack while I sacked up everything but the Tuesday paper towels.

"Y'all come back," I said. He picked up his sack and out the door they went.

They drove off with their certainly superior Yankee tires kicking up a cloud of Louisiana dust. I decided right then and there that my new woman was gonna have blond hair and big titties. What hair Mable's got left is gray. And she's got big titties but they about eighty years old.

"Amos, who was that hussy?" she asked from her stool.

"Weren't no hussy. Was a Yankee."

"Smelled like a hussy," Mable said, "and hussies don't wear brassieres."

Sometimes Mable can see better than other times. If there's one thing in this world I can't stand, it's a liar, but I said, "Didn't notice."

That Yankee's dust hadn't settled good when up drove a preacher. "Who's that?" Mable asked.

"Goddamned preacher."

"Oh, Lord!" Mable cried out and closed her squinting eyes and rocked back and forth on her stool. "Lord, forgive Amos! Lord, forgive him!"

The screen door opened and in came the preacher. He walked right by me, headed for Mable. "Good morning, Brother Amos," he told me through a preacher smile that showed every tooth in his head. "How you doing on this wonderful day the Good Lord gave us?"

"Fine," I told him and thought how wonderful it'd be if the Good Lord made that smile freeze and the floor fall in.

But they didn't. The preacher walked right up to Mable and took her hand. "Sister Mable," he told her in that honey-dripping preacher voice, "the Lord's got a place for you at the foot of His golden throne."

That's good, I wanted to say, but you better hope she can take her stool because if she sits on that golden ground, there ain't no way she could get up again. But I didn't. They started praying and I heard my name mentioned once or twice. I figure there ain't no way I can miss going to heaven. Every preacher in this parish comes by at least once a week and holds Mable's hand and mentions my name to the Good Lord. And it'd be a real blessing to me if the Good Lord would answer them back and say, "Preacher, buy yore beer and whiskey from Amos instead of driving to where don't nobody know yore face."

But the Good Lord didn't say nothing. I just stared out the door and watched a woman from over in the next parish make loops around the block, waiting on my parking lot to get empty.

"Amen," the preacher and Mable finally said. "Bless you, Sister Mable," he said. "We gonna put a plaque on every one of our new stained glass windows and dedicate them to you."

Mable likes plaques. Every church in this parish has got plaques with her name on them. You can even see her name writ on brass way up on the side of the new steeple of the downtown Pennycost church. I give her fifty dollars a month to spend like she damn well pleases, and if she wants to give it to preachers, that's her business. But I ain't gonna lie, never have, never will, and I don't like it a-tall. Fifty dollars a month is lots of money.

"Brother Amos," that preacher said to me when he let go of Mable's hand, "can we expect you in church this Sunday with Sister Mable?"

"I'll be there."

He left and the woman made one more loop and parked. I reached on the shelf behind me, got down a half-gallon of the whiskey she and her Baptist husband drank, put it in a sack, and set it beside the Tuesday paper towels. "Howdy," I said when she came in.

"Howdy," she said, and looked to see if the sack was sitting where it was supposed to be. It was, so she eye-balled around the store to make sure nobody she knew was there. They weren't, so she got a jug of milk out of the refrigerator, a loaf of bread off a rack, and put everything on the counter. "Write this

down," she said.

I had her ticket book in my hand. I figured the tax on the whiskey, a little extra of my own, and added it to the price of the whiskey and wrote it all down as gas. Then I wrote down the Tuesday paper towels, the jug of milk, and two loaves of bread. "Anything else?" I asked and pushed out the book for her to sign and started sacking up everything but the Tuesday paper towels.

"No," she said and didn't even look at the book, just like I knowed she wouldn't. "I'm in a hurry."

Out the door she went with the loaf of bread sticking up out of the sack, just like it was supposed to.

Along about dinnertime a whiskey truck had ran and so had the grocery truck. I was stocking whiskey behind the counter. That stuff's high, so I wouldn't let Mable touch it even though she wouldn't anyway. She had her specs on so she could see, and she was out in the aisle putting up groceries and telling me about the devilment the Good Lord was gonna do to my soul if I didn't quit selling beer and whiskey.

It was a real blessing when a big long car pulled in the parking lot and out stepped John Wesley Dry-Hole Patterson. Dry-Hole—that's what we call him when he ain't listening—had a big black cigar in his mouth. He's been in the oil business almost as long as I've been in the store business. He was dressed like a cowboy with a pocket full of credit cards, but if he's ever stepped into a pile of cow mess I'll be in church with Mable. I know people. Dry-Hole thinks anybody with oil wells ought to look like they from Texas. And he's right. He eased his Stetson hat down toward his eyes and stepped inside. "Morning, Amos," he said and started fumbling around in the cigar rack. "How's business?"

"Bout as low as oil, John Wesley. Don't reckon it could get much worse."

"Yep, that's mighty low, mighty low."

He put a handful of cheap cigars on the counter. He was in politics before he was in oil, so he turned to Mable and said real loud: "Morning, Sister Mable. May the Good Lord bless you today."

She looked up over her specs and a grocery shelf. "Thank you, Brother Patterson," she told him, "but if the Good Lord blessed me, He'd do away with the devil's left hand, beer, and He'd take away his right hand, whiskey, and He'd put my man Amos in church on Sunday."

"Yep," Dry-Hole said like he was running for office, "a man ought to go to church with his wife. I'm there every Sunday." He cocked his hat back on his head. "I take a little nip now and then, but—umph, umph—it's for a cough."

"Bless you, Brother Patterson."

"Thank you, Sister Mable. Oh, Sister Mable, I almost forgot. My wife said to tell you they gonna carve your name in every new pew down at the True Vine Missionary Baptist Church."

"Well, bless Sister Patterson, too."

Dry-Hole turned around and looked at me. I knowed what he wanted, but didn't get it off the shelf because he didn't want nobody thinking they knowed what he was thinking. I knowed that for a fact. "Half-gallon of Scotch," he said. "Best you got."

I put it on the counter with the cigars and rang up everything but the Tuesday paper towels. "Forty-eight twenty-two," I said.

He handed me a hundred dollar bill like I knowed he would because oil men ought to pay for things with hundred dollar bills. I handed him his change and didn't short-change him a penny because I knowed I couldn't get away with it.

And that's when the screen door opened and in walked the Harvard Yankee, gal a-trailing and a-bouncing behind him. "Say," he said to me, "would you happen to know if any of the oil wells in this area are for sale? The oil industry certainly has some interesting tax advantages."

Dry-Hole looked at me and shoved his change back across the counter. I stuck it in my register.

"Well," I told the Yankee, "this might be yore lucky day. This feller right here is Mister John Wesley Patterson." I put a Yankee look on my face. "He owns about a hundred oil wells. Folks around this area call him Gusher Patterson."

Dry-Hole moved his cigar to the other side of this mouth and stuck out his hand. A money-making look sparkled in his eyes like the rings on his fingers. "Call me Wess," he said, "because, truthfully, I've only drilled three or four gushers."

An impressed, money-losing look came to the Yankee's eyes. He shook Dry-Hole's hand and said, "Would you be interested in selling some of your wells?"

"Might be," Dry-Hole said around his cigar, "and might not be. Oil's down right now but in another two or three years it's gonna hit forty dollars a barrel. All a feller's got to do is hang on." He pulled the cigar out of his mouth, flipped the ash on the floor, and smeared it around with the toe of one of his boots like he was thinking. I knowed he'd already done his thinking. "But, on the other hand," he said and put the cigar back in his mouth, "I do have a note due at the bank."

The Yankee spoke up and Dry-Hole's note was good as paid: "I certainly would be interested in seeing some of your wells."

"Let's go outside and talk," Dry-Hole said. He put the cheap cigars in his shirt pocket, the high-priced Scotch under his arm, and out the door they went.

"Y'all come back," I told them.

They stood around Dry-Hole's big long car for awhile and talked. Dry-Hole opened the back door, flipped down the cover over the built-in bar, and came out with three glasses of ice. The Yankees drank and Dry-Hole sipped. One more drink, and in the car with Dry-Hole they got and off they went to pay the note.

Mable had finished the groceries and was back on her stool. "John Wesley shore is a fine Christian man," she said. "There's a place in heaven for John Wesley Patterson, and, Amos, there ain't no place in heaven for a man that sells the drink of the devil."

Nope, I wanted to tell Mable, Dry-Hole ain't going to heaven because he's spent his whole life drilling in the other direction. But I didn't. I went back to stocking the devil's right hand on the whiskey shelves. Mable squinted at every bottle. When I finished, I pulled Dry-Hole's hundred dollar bill out of the register and stuck it in the sack of money hid beneath the junk under the counter. It filled it up: ten thousand dollars.

I rolled it up, tied it with a string, and handed it to Mable. "Hide this with the rest," I told her.

She put on her specs, got off her stool, and waddled to the storeroom. When she got back on her stool and was squinting at me again, I said, just to make sure she wasn't trying to pull something on old Amos: "How many sacks I—we—got?"

"Nineteen," she said with a smile on her face like all that money was gonna do her some good.

She ain't no more than got her mouth closed when the door opened and in walked another preacher. "Good afternoon, Brother Amos. Isn't it a wonderful day to be doing the work of the Lord?"

I didn't even answer him. He grabbed Mabel's hand like I'm sure he grabbed his collection plate and said, "Bless you, Sister Mable."

Dry-Hole came back later that day and bought another half-gallon of Scotch. But things didn't work out the way he'd planned. Somehow or other that Harvard Yankee formed something called a Holding Company and left Dry-Hole and the bank holding the bag. Last I heard of him, him and his gal were in France. And, me, just as soon as the Good Lord blesses me with two or three more sacks of money, old Amos is Mexico bound.



Brooding - John Shamburger
Third Place Spring Art Winner

Swift

by Nathaniel O. Wood

An insect spies a dragon,
And quickly seeks seclusion;
I see but a lizard,
And ponder my intrusion.

What does this creature think of me,
My great size and propinquity?

Ah, how queer it is to be,
A swift,
Seen “Swiftianly.”





Bargain - John Shamburger

a Bunny Poem

a snack,

yet the whole

And from my mouth protruding,
the whole rabbit was too big.

by Daniel Alan Hypes

Contributors' Notes

David P. Alford is a serious artist who likes to torture turtles (and win first place).

Casey Horst thinks **Melissa Bahs** is really nice.

Tanya Bertrand is a very serious poet and musician (and Casey Horst thinks she's really awesome).

Mark Burt is transferring as soon as he can.

Chiquita likes fruit.

Valerie Clark loves to sing.

Sarah Credeur—the devil made her do it!

Shelly Davis is *REALLY* thin—she's also really nice.

Matthew Dawson is a sophomore biology major at NSU.

Now that **Dear Mary** has graduated, she feels that she can do anything she wants—even if it's living in a trailer and working at McDonalds.

Orenthia Davell Dillard says "No Comment."

dK is incredibly fond of Boone's, pornography, and Dr. Milliman.

Brian Doke—what a name!

John L. Doughty, Jr. is a good example of what happens when you burn your candle at both ends.

'**drew** believes in equal opportunity employment.

Billy Dunn gets lots of parking tickets—the Devil made her do it!

C. Michael Edwards—a very convoluted mind.

Keith Elliot—need we say more?

Field Mouse is, well, . . . just that.

Christine Floyd now lives in Texas.

Renee Foote actually got *SERENADED* on Valentine's Day!

Jill Garner is a sophomore Ad Design major who says "Women rule the world . . . They have half the money and all the @&*!#!"

Amy thinks **Christa Hopkins** is ethereal in her beauty (Casey agrees).

Daniel Alan Hypes has an extraordinary sense of humor.

Deborah Jack is, thankfully, much more stable this semester.

Josephine is an art major who is in love with Jesus and hates mushy food.

Where in the world *IS* **Angelica Kraushaar**?

Rodney Lain found a job! Teaching English!

Le Kreaux is contemplating subjects and ideas from so many different viewpoints.

Frank Lewis is a military man whose wife just adores him.

Amanda Rebecca Lord is an English Education major from Haughton, Louisiana.

Lux exists?

Sean Eric McGill is a free spirit.

W. Richard May is an English graduate student who has a fetish for butter knives.

Jessica Mentzel said the Julies could make this up but we couldn't find them—Can you?

Candy Miller is a sophomore in Scholars' College who works in the computer lab.

Sarah Elizabeth New has finally found someone to talk to.

Marcus Norwood is currently being paged.

Terry D. Pleasant is forty years old, married, has two children. His hobbies are reading, thinking about life, and wrestling with his girls. His goals are to be the best father and husband in the world. He is pursuing a degree in a little of this and a little of that.

Randy Price's daughter, Alex (now the most beautiful toddler in the known universe), walks, talks, and fully understands the concept of object permanence, as well as the pitfalls of the treacherous visual cliff.

Gregory John Romero is a Scholars' College freshman who is in theatre.

Jennifer Rowland is a Scholars' College Senior in the throes of thesis torment—she will survive . . . hopefully.

The Scorpion loves to write poetry.

John Shamburger is a really neat guy who likes to draw.

M. R. Simmons is stalking monsters in the slithy tove.

Soy-Moo-Goo was a Vegan until she met Lisa's lasagne (now world famous by the way!).

Casey Horst thinks **Charlotte R. Sullivan** is really cool. (Who is Casey Horst anyway?)

Julie Anne Tisdale is a pomegranate. No, actually she's a student at Louisiana Scholars' College. She loves croutons, Laurie, and ferrets in that order. Her biggest goal in life is to run off to New York, pierce 12 body parts, shave most of her hair and dye the rest purple, and join a riot Girl punk band (and marry Grant).

Matthew Todd is a freshman psychology major at Scholars' College whose interests include playing drums, taking acting lessons, and writing books. (He also likes really long contributors' notes.)

M. Julyahana Walker is a buxom beauty (or so says Casey Horst).

We know nothing about **Matt Watson** and that's just fine with us.

Chaye Whitney is another unsolved mystery.

Nathaniel D. Wood is a "punctuation-happy" junior in Scholars' College who just returned from a two-year mission in Poland and someday hopes to return.

Casey Horst is a runaway staff member who mouthed off enough to get in the contributors' notes.

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